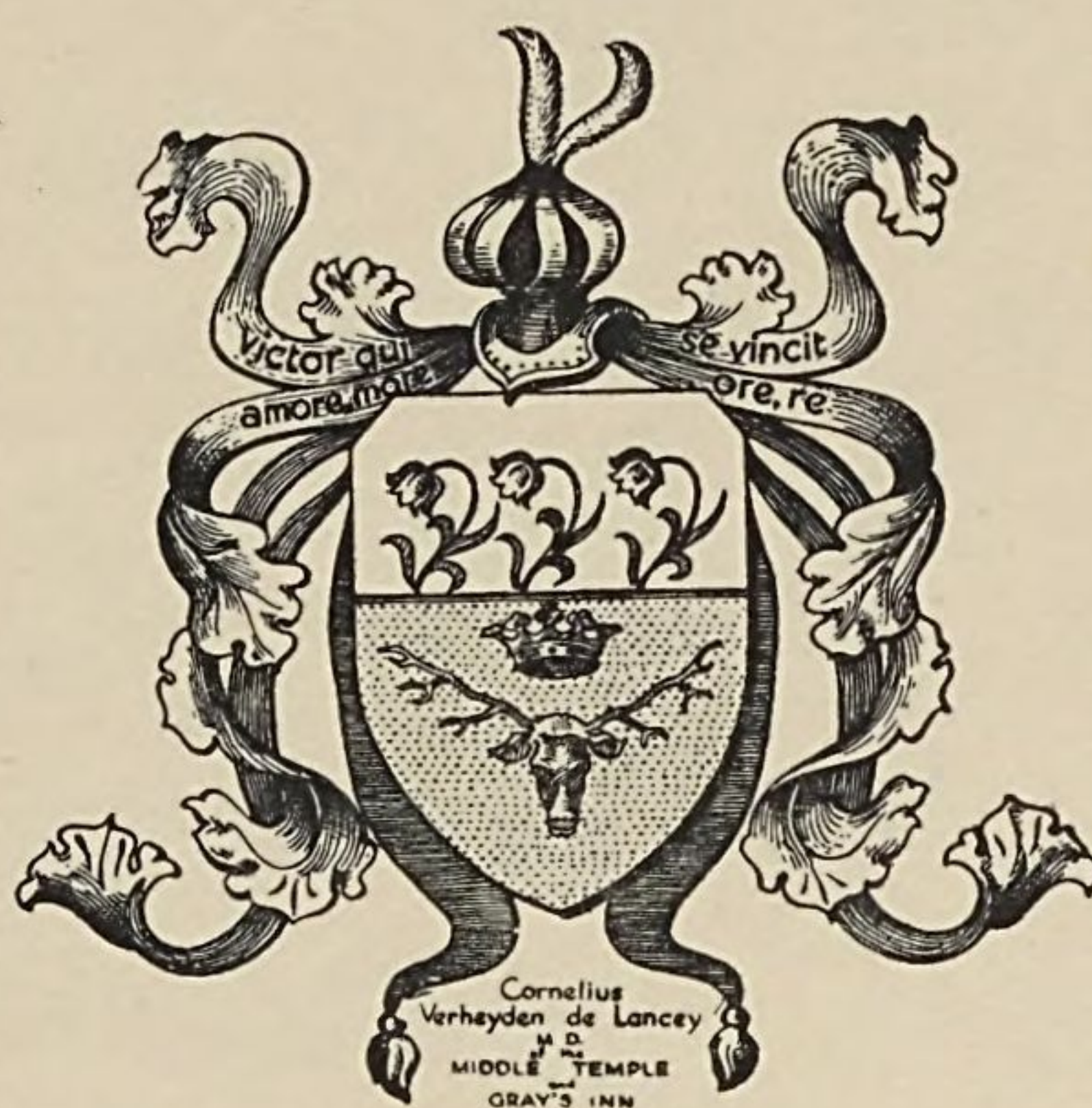


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Dec. 1908.

A BIOGRAPHY
OF
DAVID COX.



David Cox

A BIOGRAPHY

OF

DAVID COX:

WITH

Remarks on His Works and Genius.

BY

WILLIAM HALL.

WITH ADDITIONS, BY JOHN THACKRAY BUNCE.

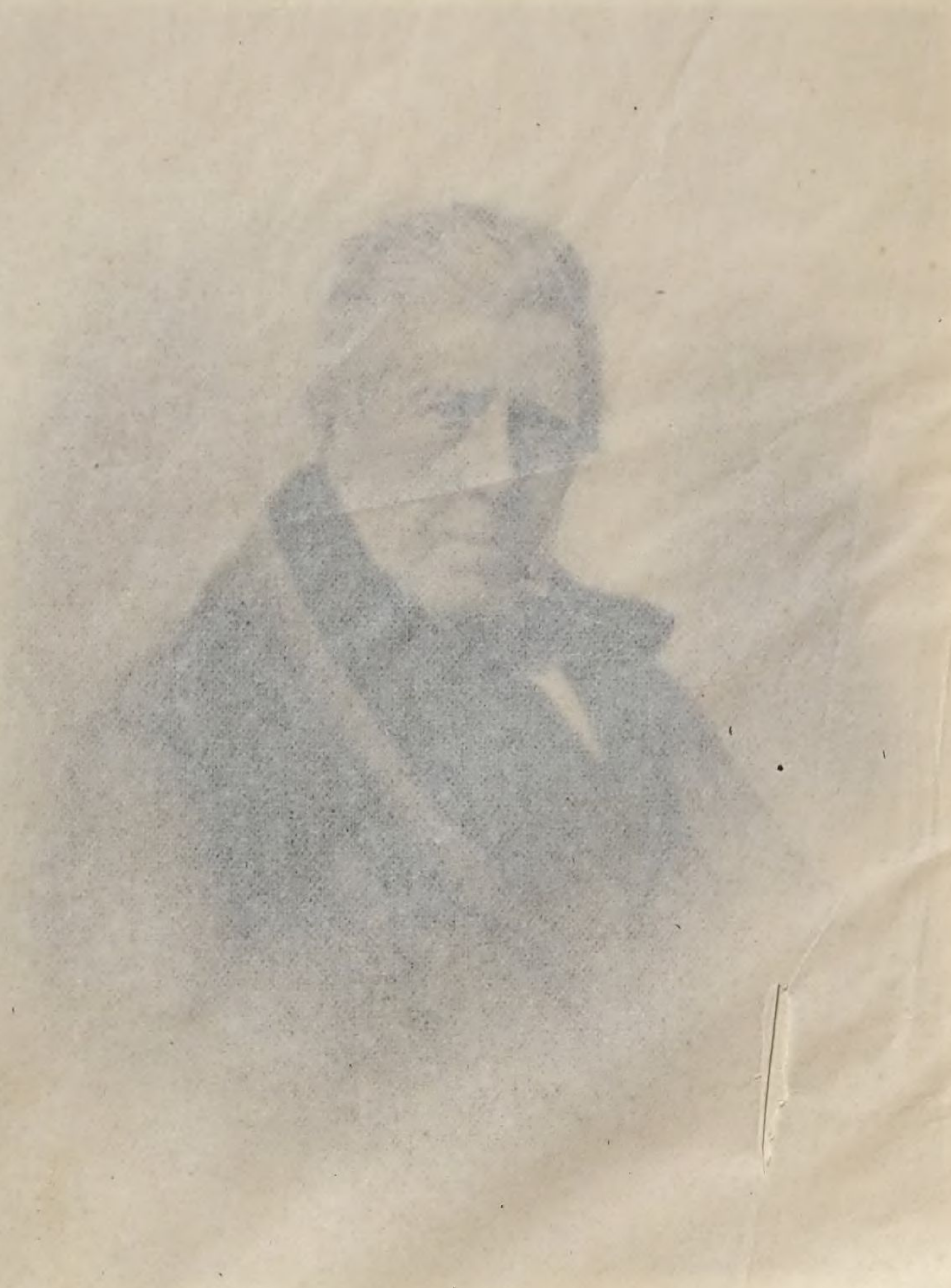
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1881.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

IN the introduction prefixed to his work, Mr. William Hall, the Author of this Memoir of David Cox, has explained the motive which led him to undertake the task, and also the qualifications he possessed for executing it. Long and close intimacy with Cox, during the whole period of the artist's residence at Harborne, afforded his Biographer special opportunities of learning the history of his friend, of studying his works and his method, and of forming an estimate of his genius. It was not as a person uninstructed in Art, or as an amateur, that Mr. Hall entered upon the work. He was himself an artist of long experience and of no mean capacity—one, indeed, from whom David Cox did not disdain to receive suggestions as to the choice and treatment of his subjects, and hints as to the method of painting in oil colours. To his technical knowledge, Mr. Hall added the advantages derived from a large acquaintance with books and men, and these were enhanced by singular modesty of character, refinement of taste, and by a poetic temperament, united—a rare combination—with sound practical judgment. The counsel and sympathy of such a man were of great value to one so sensitive, retiring, and self-distrustful as was David Cox; and the unbroken friendship and

unreserved confidence of thirty years attest the estimation which Cox placed upon this association with his friend and Biographer.

A brief notice of the Author may not be unacceptable to readers of the Memoir. Mr. Hall was born in Bristol Street, Birmingham, on the 18th of January, 1812. His father was a worker in fancy tortoiseshell—a trade then largely practised in the town, but now almost wholly extinct—and to him William Hall was apprenticed, and served out his time as a tortoiseshell worker. He disliked the occupation, for he had long cherished a desire to become a painter, and had been quietly teaching himself the elements of landscape art. The father, however, objected to the young man's proposed change of plan; but seems ultimately to have given way, and with the assistance of his uncle, Mr. Henry Edwards, one of the leading silversmiths of Birmingham, William Hall was enabled for a brief period to carry on his art education in London. He went there in 1834, and spent some time in copying portraits in the National Gallery, especially those by Reynolds and Gainsborough, for whose works he had a particular affection. After a year's residence in London, he returned to Birmingham, and began to employ himself as an artist, receiving help in this way from some of the local painters, and from amateurs, notably from Mr. Charles Hawker (who largely assisted in forming the famous Gillott collection of pictures), and from Mr. Zachariah Parkes, whose daughter he afterwards married. This marriage took place in 1841,

by which time Mr. Hall had fairly begun to establish himself as a landscape painter. He exhibited chiefly in Birmingham, and occasionally in London, but his works were usually executed for commissions given by friends who could appreciate his merits. In 1852, he was elected a member of the Birmingham Society of Artists, and for many years acted as its curator. He was also honorary curator to the Corporation Art Gallery of the town. He died on the 24th of April, 1880, at his house at King's Heath, near Birmingham. The finishing touches to his *Memoir of David Cox* were given only a few weeks before his death.

Mr. Hall painted comparatively little : not more, probably, than half a dozen landscapes, of cabinet size, in the course of a year. These he often kept a long time in his own hands, being fastidious as to finish and expression. His works have about them a charming outdoor freshness, and a certain poetical quality, very difficult to describe, but at once recognised in the pictures themselves. One of them, a view from the door of Bettws Church, painted in company with David Cox, and now in the Birmingham Art Gallery, is a good example of his style. The chief occupation of Mr. Hall's life, however, was that of an adviser of picture buyers who desired to form choice collections. In this capacity he was invaluable. His fine taste, and large knowledge of art, made him an admirable guide as to the merit of the selected works, while his high sense of personal honour and his unvarying honesty insured his clients against the too frequent tricks of the

picture market. All who had business relations with Mr. Hall knew that they could trust his judgment and his honesty, and he thus acquired a large connection as an adviser and a dealer. He had great skill, also, in the restoration of works of art, and was much employed in this direction.

For his personal qualities Mr. Hall was held in esteem by all those who knew him, and in affection by those who knew him well. He was a man of amiable character, kindly and generous—one of those who had no enemies, nor ever spoke or thought unkindly of others. Though a reserved man—extremely reticent with regard to himself—he was a great favourite in the society he frequented; having a keen, quiet humour, untouched by malice, being courteous in manner, and invariably thoughtful of others. The attractions of his conversation were considerable, for he had read much and with profit, and his own original powers as a writer, both in prose and in refined and graceful verse, were far above the average. One of the great pleasures, as it was one of the distinctions, of his life, was his intimacy with David Cox. The two men suited each other as perfectly in habit and temperament as in occupation; and from the date of Cox's settlement at Harborne until the period of his death, they were constantly in association, visiting at each other's houses, and travelling together on sketching tours in Wales. Long before the picture-buying public recognised the surpassing merit of Cox's work, Mr. Hall discerned it, and laboured hard to inspire others

with the feeling of enthusiasm which animated himself. It was a source of happiness to him in his closing years—often broken by painful illness—that he had lived to see the greatness of Cox admitted; and it was one of his consolations to have prepared a memorial of his friend, in the hope that it might one day see the light. In this work the reader will feel, with the writer of these lines, that Mr. Hall has done justice to the genius of David Cox, and has left a not unworthy memorial of himself.

J. THACKRAY BUNCE.

Birmingham, February, 1881.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THIS Biography was commenced about ten years after the death of David Cox in 1859, and was carried on towards completion as opportunity offered, and as the Author felt disposed to pursue his labours. For a time it was laid aside, circumstances occurring which led him to think his work would not be required; but the exhibition of the Artist's productions in Liverpool, by the Art Club in that town, in 1875, for the catalogue of which the Author was invited to write an introduction, together with other considerations it is not necessary to mention, induced him to take it up again, and bring it into its present form. The MS. has been revised, considerable additions have been made since it was first written, and much has been re-composed.

From the Author's intimate friendship with David Cox, during his residence at Harborne, and up to the time of his death, he had frequent opportunities of hearing from the Artist's own lips the particulars of his history and artistic career, and of noting much that exemplified his character and illustrated his genius. He is also indebted to Cox's old friend and pupil, the late Mr. Edward Everitt, of Birmingham; to Mr. Charles W. Radclyffe, another old and attached friend; and to others, for information respecting the Artist's early days.

Such matters as the Author conceived would interest the public regarding the uneventful life and career of a man who was enthusiastically devoted to his art, who lived in a quiet, unobtrusive manner, and was rarely drawn aside from his beloved pursuit, he has noted down, in the hope of affording pleasure to those who may care to read the biography of an artist of acknowledged genius, whose productions have done much to elevate British art in the world's estimation; and also to aid as an encouragement to young aspirants for renown who may be endeavouring to follow, though they can scarcely hope to rival, David Cox in the same profession.

WILLIAM HALL.

*Mayfield, King's Heath, near Birmingham,
February, 1880.*

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DAVID COX.

CHAPTER I.

1783 to 1804.

The Birth, Parentage, and Early Years of David Cox—His Apprenticeship to a Miniature Painter—Brush-washer and Scene-painter at the Birmingham Theatre—W. C. Macready, the Tragedian.

IN reading the biography of an eminent man—as in following the onward course of some famous river—it is always delightful to note and dwell upon the first start in existence ; to contemplate the fount and cradle of life and being—the circumstances of birth and parentage—the surroundings of infancy—the indications of early boyhood—the first inflection of the mind pointing to the future course, long before that course has been marked out by strong desire, by will, by moulding circumstance, and augmented power, compelling it to take its final direction. The stream—it may be—wells forth in some sequestered spot—shady, obscure, untraced, and unknown—bubbling up among stones and mosses, surrounded with reeds and bracken, creeping for a time along its tiny channel, just tinkling among the pebbles. After a while, by numberless tributaries, its volume increases ; it begins to grow stronger, and cheerily leaps along its

bed, singing sweet songs as it goes ; until at length it swells and widens, and dashes impetuously on its way—a mighty river—seen and known by all, bearing with its course beauty and strength and blessing for all within reach. It is pleasant in like manner to trace the life-stream of one destined to become famous, from the cradle of existence ; to note the surroundings of early days ; to mark the first bias of the young mind indicating its future and ultimate direction ; to note the impediments in its way—the obstacles to be encountered and triumphantly overcome by persistence, a stout heart, the sense of power daily growing stronger, the consciousness of success in view, and the prospect of a brilliant future, and then the steady march forward to the end !

David Cox, whose genius and whose exquisite transcripts of Nature have earned for him a foremost place among the creators of a School of English Water-Colour Painters, was a native of Birmingham. He first saw the light of day on the 29th of April, 1783. He was born of humble parents, in a very unpretending abode, situated in Heath Mill Lane, Deritend—a suburb of the great Midland metropolis. The house stood not very far from a well-known ancient inn, called the “ Old Crown,” still existing—a notable specimen of half-timbered work, and which, as a mansion of considerable importance, attracted the notice of Leland, when he visited Birmingham in the reign of Henry VIII. Cox’s humble birthplace, however, and all the adjacent tenements of that date, have been swept away to make room for the requirements of our modern civilisation. Even

the street itself has disappeared ; nothing remains but its name, and the picturesque half-timbered, heavy-gabled, ancient inn, which for so many years has been a conspicuous object at its southern corner.

Joseph Cox, the father of David, was twice married. By his first wife, Frances Walford, who was the daughter of a farmer and miller of Birmingham—the same Walford who built the windmill (remembered by many) that crowned the summit of a gentle elevation looking down upon one of the town's ancient roadways, called Holloway Head—he had two children—a daughter, Mary Ann, who was married to Mr. Ward, Professor of Music, residing at or near Manchester ; and David, the subject of this biography. His occupation was that of a whitesmith, in contradistinction from that of a blacksmith, or shoer of horses. He was a forger of bayonets and gun-barrels, as well as being a general artificer in iron. His son has said that when he first visited London to obtain employment as an artist, he sometimes held in conversation the sentries who patrolled before the Government Offices, to detect, if he could, his father's private mark on the muskets they carried. It was intended that David, when old enough to wield hammer and file, should be brought up to his father's trade ; and it is believed that for a short time he actually worked at the anvil and bench ; but he was a weakly boy, not at all fitted for so laborious a craft. The “Divinity that shapes our ends” was exemplified in the life of young David Cox. He might have stood at the anvil until old and grey-headed—a smith, like his

father! Until the end of his days he might have been a forger of implements of warfare—a maker of bolts and bars—and have stood at the fire, girt with leather apron, hammer or tongs in hand. But this was not to be. An accident, sad at the time, but happy in its issue, determined otherwise. In early youth, the lad stumbled over a door-scraper in the evening dusk, and broke his leg; and this caused the poor little cripple to divert his thoughts into another channel. Great were the lamentations of his friends at this untoward accident, which was looked on as a permanent misfortune. It was evident that all ideas of David following his father's business must be abandoned. He had, moreover, greatly outgrown his strength, and the labour of the forge and workshop was held to be too trying for a constitution by no means robust. Some other occupation, of a lighter kind, was therefore desired for him. The broken limb compelled the boy to keep his bed for several weeks, lying quiet and unmoved, till the fracture had united; but so soon as he was permitted to sit up, propped with pillows, for a short time, he began to cast about for something with which to amuse himself, and while away the weary hours. A few prints were given him, to interest and occupy his mind. He had previously shown some cleverness with his pencil—just a child's very small ability, frequently made so much of by a fond parent's love—and he expressed a wish to copy, with pen or pencil, some of the prints, for his amusement. His friends complied with the request, and he was furnished with the necessary materials.

Little David went to work with a will, and soon produced two or three drawings, which mightily pleased his parents, who no doubt thought them quite wonderful for a child of his tender years. Seeing what he could do, so quickly and so cleverly, a relative presented him with a box of colours and some brushes. Oh, the happy day! Who does not recollect his first colour-box, and the pleasure of contemplating the rows of pretty pigments which lay side by side, ready for use? The young artist painted away with great delight and perseverance, and in no long time achieved a number of small successes. His friends were delighted with his productions; they even ventured to predict that in course of time, with practice and study, he might, if he chose, become an artist of celebrity. But they had many misgivings in discussing the subject. We may conceive the anxious debates which took place in the family circle night after night, when David's future course came up for consideration. Was it possible for him to maintain himself respectably by his pencil, if he took up the profession of a painter of pictures? Ought he to be encouraged to follow the bent of his inclination in a pursuit which, in his surroundings, promised so little?

We may well fancy the boy's parents discussing his prospects, as he lay suffering from his broken limb, and as the result of the discussion leaving them to time and chance, he still going on executing the poor little works of art which afforded him so much delight. These humble achievements of his boyish skill were sometimes sold to friends for trifling sums, which

pleased his parents, and afforded the young painter no small encouragement. Something must be done, however, and therefore it was at length determined that he should receive a few lessons in drawing at a night school kept by Mr. Joseph Barber, of Birmingham, a competent drawing-master and artist. With the exception of two or three lessons, in after years, from that admirable master of water-colours, Mr. John Varley, the instruction David Cox received in drawing whilst at this night-school of Mr. Barber's was all he had. For the rest he was indebted solely to himself—to the gifts with which he was endowed by nature; to the study of the works of masters of the art which came in his way; to a close, intelligent observation of the beauties of nature; to constant practice, and to a stout heart.

The proficiency of the young artist under the instruction of Mr. Barber was considered so satisfactory, that at the usual age he was apprenticed to a miniature-painter in Birmingham, a man named Fieldler, and by him was taught to execute subjects for lockets, and for the lids of snuff-boxes, which at that time gave employment to many persons in the town. These subjects were frequently taken from the pictures of Teniers, Ostade, and other painters of the Dutch School, and were views in Holland, with out-of-door merry-makings; cottage interiors, with boors drinking, smoking, and playing at cards; quarrelling peasants, armed with drawn knives and three-legged stools; heads of burgomasters, after Rembrandt; and subjects

of a similar kind. It may be taken for granted that young David delighted in copying these pictures ; it was an occupation congenial to his taste ; moreover, it put a little money in his purse. He felt that he was beginning to earn a living by his pencil, and doubtless thought he saw his way to prosperity at no distant period. But, unfortunately—or, looking at his future career, shall we not rather say most fortunately?—for him, before he had been very long apprenticed, his master died. The poor man committed suicide, and poor David was cast loose upon the world without an occupation. What a blow to his towering hopes and expectations this unlooked-for event must have been ! No doubt he considered his once fair prospects of becoming an artist had vanished for ever. How long he remained in this sad position is uncertain, but after a time, and through the instrumentality of a relative—the same who had presented him with the colour-box when confined to his bed with a broken limb—he was offered employment at the Birmingham Theatre, then under the management of the elder Macready, as assistant to a M. de Maria, scene-painter to the company, a person of considerable ability in his line. Cox's work was to grind colours, wash brushes, prepare canvas, and do what else in a general way might be required in the scene-painter's loft. The offer now made him was gladly accepted. He thought he saw in the appointment an opportunity for further advancement in the art he loved, and entered on his duties with an eager relish for the work, looking

forward to the time when possibly he might become as clever as his employer, and some day, perhaps, master scene-painter himself. Little David laboured assiduously in his new vocation, and watched with an attentive eye De Maria's method of working, and all the expedients to produce "effect" in his scenery, of which afterwards David Cox was so great a master himself. He thought highly of his employer's skill, not only at that time, but to his latest days, and often spoke of him in eulogistic terms, saying, in his cheery way, "De Maria was a very clever fellow indeed!" Many years after Cox had left the theatre, when he had become a member of the Society of Painters in Water-Colours, and an exhibitor in their rooms, he was one day strolling through the gallery, the Exhibition being then open, when he saw an elderly gentleman, catalogue in hand, looking admiringly at one of his drawings. Cox recognised in the visitor his old master at the Birmingham Theatre, De Maria, and addressed him by name, but was evidently forgotten. Cox inquired if he did not remember "one David Cox, a very young artist, who resided in Birmingham many years ago?" "What! little David, who used to wash brushes and grind colours for me at the theatre?" "Yes; I am little David." "Did you make that drawing?" pointing to the one he had been admiring. "I did," said Cox; "I learned a great deal from *you*, sir." "Then I have a great deal to learn from *you* now!" rejoined the old man; and both master and pupil were well satisfied.

After Cox had been employed some time in this humble capacity at the theatre, he was suddenly and unexpectedly called upon to try his "'prentice hand" in the production of a bit of original scenery. His master, De Maria, was absent from the theatre on account of illness; a new piece was being prepared for the stage; and a portrait of the heroine, an important feature in the performance, was required to be exhibited during the play. Search was made among the scenery in stock, but nothing suitable could be found. The manager was at his wits' ends; he knew not what to do. Young Cox, seeing the dilemma Macready was in, stepped up to him and said, "If he might be allowed to try, he thought he could execute what was wanted." "You!" said the manager, with indignant surprise. "Yes," said David, "I think I can do it." "Then try," rejoined the manager; "it *must* be done!" David, who, during his apprenticeship to the miniature painters, had often executed heads of a small size (one of which, most beautifully painted, remains in the possession of his son) went to work with a will, and soon produced what was required. He attentively studied the actress who was to personate the heroine of the piece, and had a sitting to complete the likeness. The manager was much pleased with his performance; and David was so delighted at his success that when the play was acted on the first night, he went into the gallery to see how his picture looked across the theatre, and to hear the commendations bestowed upon it. His master, De Maria, also complimented him on his skill.

How long Cox remained discharging the duties of his very subordinate position is not exactly known, but after a time De Maria resigned his appointment, and David Cox was installed in his place. This was an important step in the young artist's career; it gave him the opportunity of practice, which he specially needed. With Macready and the players he travelled from town to town, visiting Leicester, Sheffield, Manchester, and other places. Occasionally he essayed his powers as a performer—of course in very humble parts; and once, in the absence of the regular actor, he even ventured to aspire so high as to undertake the important character of pantaloon in a pantomime! Although now head scene-painter to Macready, his name, as being of no account, was never mentioned in the bills. This on one occasion gave him great annoyance. A new piece was to be brought out; large posters were placarded about the town; and advertisements appeared in the papers announcing the names of the performers—all “stars” of the first magnitude; with “entirely new and most beautiful scenery” (the work of poor Cox), painted by the unrivalled artist, Mr. Daubeney, of London! David Cox was completely ignored! On remonstrating with the manager, Macready flew into a rage (he very often did), and told him to “go and be hanged!” “Who was *he*?” “Did he suppose that *his* name would draw the public?” Cox's motto, “Honour to whom honour is due!” was laughed to scorn, and he retired from “the manager's room” an aggrieved and disappointed man. For some time, how-

ever, he continued to follow the fortunes of Macready as his principal scene-painter; but his parents, fearing that his moral character might suffer from his connection with the players, importuned him to quit the theatre, and give his attention to other pursuits. Cox was, however, bound to Macready by articles of agreement for a stipulated term, and the manager, unwilling to forego his services, flatly refused to liberate him. Before long David's mother again wrote a very pressing letter, entreating him to return home. Cox dared not show this letter to the manager, but read it to Mrs. Macready, thinking doubtless that as a mother she would sympathise with his mother's anxieties, and besought her to use her influence with her husband to obtain his release. Arguments and entreaties at length prevailed. The wife's appeal soon brought about the desired result, and Cox was set at liberty.

Young Macready, the eminent tragedian, was a boy at Rugby School at the time that Cox was in his father's employ, and had a small toy theatre constructed for his amusement, for which Cox painted the requisite scenery. One of these scenes represented a flock of sheep being driven to market; it was fixed upon rollers, and by turning a handle behind was made to move forward, so that the sheep which disappeared on the one side quickly came round upon the other, and the flock, to the delight of the beholders, seemed interminable. This was the contrivance of Cox, for which he received great praise from Macready, junior. When, a few years before the death of the artist, it was proposed that a portrait of

him should be painted by an eminent hand, to be placed in some public institution in his native town, and for which purpose subscriptions were solicited from friends and admirers, the author of this Memoir ventured to apply to the great actor (among others) for assistance to carry out the project, taking the liberty to remind him of early days, and stating that David Cox, the famous artist, in whose honour this proposal was made, was the same person who, in the days of his boyhood, was colour-grinder and afterwards scene-painter at his father's theatre in Birmingham. The following reply was received by the writer:—

Abergele, N. Wales, July 3rd, 1855.

SIR,—In acknowledging your favour of the 28th June, forwarded to me here, I beg to express the great pleasure I have in remembering my early acquaintance with Mr. David Cox, and the gratification it has afforded me to observe his rise to such distinguished eminence in his art.

I beg you will do me the favour to convey the expression of my admiration, with my best wishes, to your distinguished townsman ; with which I beg to enclose my subscription.

I remain, Sir,

Your very Obedient Servant,

W. C. MACREADY.

To Mr. Wm. Hall.

CHAPTER II.

1804 to 1814.

Removal to London—Marriage and Early Struggles—Appointed Drawing-master at the Military College at Farnham.

AFTER leaving Macready and the theatre, David Cox spent some little time in Birmingham with his parents, making sketches in the neighbourhood, and looking about for some opening by which to earn a living by his pencil. He had a strong desire to settle in London, where he hoped to meet with encouragement in the pursuit of his art ; and having a prospect of some temporary employment at Astley's Circus, he left his native town in the year 1804 to seek his fortune in the metropolis. On his arrival in London, accompanied by his mother, the first thing done was to look for comfortable lodgings, and these were met with in Lambeth, at the house of a Mrs. Ragg, who had two daughters residing with her, one of whom—Mary Ragg—Cox was destined to fall in love with, and eventually to marry. Cox's practice as a scene-painter had rendered him expert in the use of the pencil, and failing to obtain at Astley's the employment he had expected, he resumed his old occupation of making drawings, which he offered to the London print-sellers. He also executed, for some of the provincial theatres, commissions for scenery ; and

there is still in existence, in the possession of Mr. John Wood, tobacconist and dealer in pictures, of Wolverhampton, a receipted bill of his, in which he charges the manager of the then theatre at that place with "310 square yards of scenery, at four shillings per yard."

Cox's prices for the small drawings he sold at this time were curiously low. Two guineas per dozen was his regular charge for subjects in Indian ink or sepia, which were disposed of by the dealers to country drawing masters chiefly, who visited London twice a year to purchase "copies" for the use of their pupils. Another water-colour painter with whom Cox formed an intimacy at that time—the great architectural draughtsman, Samuel Prout,—was then likewise occupied in a similar manner; and it was arranged between them, in order to avoid collision, that they should offer their productions at different shops, Cox keeping to one shop and Prout to the other, as at that period there were only two places of any note at which a sufficiently large stock of drawings was kept to afford a choice to customers. A few of these early works, by both artists, are still to be met with. In wandering through the streets of London, Cox made many a halt at the windows in which pictures were exhibited for sale, studying attentively the best of those productions, and gathering hints for his own practice. Many a pleasurable half-hour, as he has often said, did he spend in this manner. The drawings of Havell and John Varley he greatly admired, especially those by

the latter artist; and he determined out of his scanty earnings, if possible, to obtain a few lessons from Varley. The terms were half a guinea a lesson — a large sum to Cox in those days — but he was fully aware of the value of such instruction, and resolved to devote the little money he could spare to be put at the outset in the right way. Accordingly he called upon Varley, and received one or two lessons, for which he paid the customary fee. On going again for another lesson Varley said to him, “What is your object in coming to me for instruction? Are you not an artist?” “I am *trying* to be one,” replied Cox. “Oh, then come whenever you please and see me work,” rejoined Varley; “I will take no more money from *you*.” Cox always expressed a high opinion of Varley’s abilities, and often spoke with emotion of his great kindness to him at that time.

Notwithstanding the modest manner in which David Cox spoke of himself to Varley, as “trying to be an artist,” he had firmly resolved in his own mind to become one, if assiduous study, labour, and perseverance, could make him one. He spared no pains to inform himself of the principles on which the great masters had worked; he bought engravings from their productions, which he attentively studied; and he diligently copied pictures as opportunity afforded. He told the writer that he once made a copy of a fine landscape by Gaspar Poussin, of whose works he had a high opinion. The picture could not be removed from the owner’s possession, and he went day after day until his task was

completed, painting under great difficulties in a dealer's shop.

The scenery of the Thames afforded many subjects for Cox's pencil; and he worked industriously in sketching from nature in the environs of London, picking up quaint rustic bits, and drawing picturesque old buildings, then found in every direction, as well as in delineating the more captivating features of rural landscape. Many drawings of this character were made during the summer and autumn of 1804.

In the following year he took his first trip into North Wales, and visited some of the most romantic spots in the Principality. The sketches he made on that occasion were chiefly in outline, and in Indian Ink. The author has possessed one of the pen-and-ink drawings Cox made on this journey. The subject is a picturesque bridge spanning a river; a rocky height on the left, a distant mountain, and some bushes and weeds in the foreground. On the back is written, "Half a mile from Dinas Mowddy, July 17th, 1805. D. Cox." This sketch, interesting from its early date, is in the possession of one of the artist's enthusiastic admirers, Mr. Holbrook Gaskell, of Liverpool, to whom the author presented it. Cox made a considerable number of sketches during that first trip into Wales, from which, on his return to London, he executed more elaborate drawings for sale. In the succeeding year, 1806, he again visited North Wales, accompanied by one or two brother artists, and made drawings in colours; but his colours were few and simple, and his effects of course were not very striking.

Whilst earning a precarious subsistence by making drawings for sale to the dealers, and sometimes painting scenery for the provincial theatres, David Cox fell in love with and married the eldest daughter of his landlady, Miss Mary Ragg. This was in the year 1808. By her he had one child, the present Mr. David Cox. Mary Ragg made an excellent and loving wife. She was somewhat older than her husband; her health was not strong; but she had intellectual tastes, and encouraged Cox in his labours, and gave him steady and helpful support in the many trying struggles of his early married life. She was fond of painting, more especially of the works of her husband, and the author has seen drawings in the artist's possession which he declined to part with because they were favourites of his wife's, and had the name of "Mary Cox" written upon them.

Shortly after his marriage he took a small cottage in the neighbourhood of Dulwich, and there resided several years, making drawings on the Common—at that time the frequent resort of the gipsy tribes—and from the surrounding scenery. In fact, he scoured the country in every direction in search of subjects on which to exercise his skill. Occasionally he paid a visit to Birmingham, to see his parents, who at that time resided in Hill Street, a short distance from the top, on the right-hand side, where the present Post-office now stands. Whilst staying there he made sketches in the country around, picking up many picturesque subjects; and he also gave a few lessons in drawing to such as

were desirous of availing themselves of the services of a skilful practitioner. Mr. Edward Everitt, afterwards a well-known Birmingham artist, was one of those who received instruction from Cox when visiting his father and mother. Mr. Everitt has told the writer that, on one occasion, he was taking a lesson at the house in Hill Street, David Cox, junior, being then an infant and sleeping in his cot in the same apartment, when the child suddenly woke up and began to cry. No one else being there to attend to him, Cox left his seat, saying, "Excuse me, Edward; I must go and hush the baby." With varying fortunes Cox pursued his art. His struggles to acquire a reputation, and even to live, were sufficiently trying, but he stoutly persisted in his endeavours; and although often disappointed, and sometimes greatly cast down, he was never turned aside from his aim. In all his difficulties and discouragements he had faith in himself. Even when his fortunes were at the lowest point—the sale of his little drawings at the shops providing but a scanty subsistence—he contrived to keep up his spirits tolerably well, and was never disheartened for long. Once, however, his means were nearly exhausted, and the prospect before him was gloomy in the extreme. He could sell no drawings for a time, and was greatly troubled in mind. His good wife, seeing him so low-spirited, suggested that he should "try something else." "Suppose you were to teach perspective, David?" This idea, somewhat startling at first, on reflection commended itself to him, as he thought there were people about—builders and

others—who might like to know a little of the rules of perspective to enable them to draw plans and elevations. Accordingly he resolved to make the experiment, but, as he was not proficient in the science himself, it was necessary that he should become better acquainted with it before undertaking to instruct others. It has been said that the main secret of success in teaching is to be “just one lesson in advance of the pupil.” Now, Cox was exactly in that position—or, at all events, fully resolved to be so; but to keep ahead in his instructions it was desirable to look into some standard treatise on the subject, and to master the more advanced rules. He was advised that the best book for his purpose was “Euclid’s Elements of Geometry;” he therefore hastened into London to buy a copy. On returning home, he sat down to study Euclid, but had not proceeded far in his task before his brain became confused and his sight somewhat dim. He felt that the difficulties he had encountered were quite insurmountable. Problems were not in his way. In fact, he could make nothing at all of “Euclid.” This was unfortunate, as, having previously hung in his window a card, with the notification “Perspective Taught Here,” neatly printed upon it, he had received one application for lessons from a neighbouring carpenter, or small builder, who thought that acquaintance with the rules of perspective would be useful to him in his business. The new pupil was coming on the following morning to have his first lesson. Cox was in a great flurry, and entirely at a loss what to do. He turned over the pages

of Euclid again and again, but to no avail. He was distracted and lost. The more he studied the more confused he became. At length, in a towering rage, he took up the volume, and exclaiming, "Confound Euclid!" flung it with such violence against the wall (a thin fragile affair of lath and plaster, constituting a kind of inner wall to the outer one of brick), that it went clean through, and falling between the two, disappeared irrecoverably. "And there it is now!" Cox used to say, when in great glee he told the story in after years.

One of Cox's earliest patrons, when he took up teaching as a profession, was Colonel Windsor, afterwards Earl of Plymouth. The Colonel had greatly admired some drawings which he had seen at one of the London shops, and was desirous of taking lessons from the artist; but it was with difficulty that he obtained from the dealer a very indefinite address. He was told that the artist was from the country, and resided at a distance from London, somewhere near the Common at Dulwich. This vague direction was, however, sufficient for the Colonel, who managed to find out the whereabouts of Cox. It was on a Sunday morning, just before dinner-time, when a knock was heard at the door of Cox's cottage, and a gentleman entered who inquired if the person he was addressing was the artist of certain water-colour drawings which he had seen in London. Satisfied on this point, he expressed a wish to receive a few lessons, and, terms being agreed on, he fixed a day to call again for the purpose. But (as Cox used to narrate

the story) the Colonel stayed so long, chatting about art and other matters, that the neck of mutton which was roasting at the fire for dinner was burnt to a cinder, and filled the house with an intolerable stench. The Colonel, however, being so absorbed in the subjects of the conversation, never perceived the artist's difficulty, or took any notice of the mishap he was causing in Cox's domestic arrangements. Dinner was completely spoiled when the new pupil took his departure; but the Colonel afterwards made ample amends for his thoughtlessness; he was so pleased with the instruction he received, and with Cox's simple, engaging manners, that he gave him introductions to several ladies of high position, who also took lessons, the profits of which soon placed the artist in more comfortable circumstances. His terms at first were five shillings a lesson, but these, by the advice of Colonel Windsor's mother, were speedily raised, and he received from his pupils ten shillings for an hour's instruction.

When the Society of Painters in Water-Colours was first formed—in the year 1805—the year following Cox's arrival in London from the country, it may be presumed that he was too immature an artist, and too little known, to have attracted the attention of that body, and therefore had no thought of offering himself as a member. But he was induced by some means to join a similar society, which, perhaps from a spirit of opposition, had sprung into existence, and which also held an annual exhibition at the West End of London; and for a brief season he

remained a responsible member of that body. His connection with this society was in some respects a most unfortunate circumstance for him. The art-loving public of the day did not sufficiently appreciate the endeavours of the members to instruct and delight them ; the exhibitions did not cover their expenses ; the Society could not pay its way ; and arrears of rent so accumulated that the landlord would wait no longer. Accordingly he levied a distraint on the contents of the gallery, and the whole of poor Cox's drawings exhibited that year, with some by other members, were swept away to satisfy the claim. This was a heavy blow to Cox, who could by no means afford to lose the proceeds of so much labour as these drawings represented. He did not recover from the annoyance of the loss for a long time, and certainly he never forgot it. It made him exceedingly reluctant to connect himself with any similar body whereby he might incur the slightest risk of losing money. When, in after years, he came to end his days near his native town, his brother artists of Birmingham wished him to become a member of their Society, but he decidedly refused to accept any responsibility, although frequently he exhibited in their rooms, and he was accordingly elected an honorary member—the Society being, of course, glad to have him amongst them on any terms, his name and fame adding greatly to the strength of the Association.

It was about nine years after the untoward event above mentioned that David Cox became a member of the Society of Painters in Water-Colours, of which he

continued an ornament until the day of his death.* It is presumed that before he joined them, he satisfied himself there was no probability of such another disaster as that which had previously befallen him. The Society was highly popular, and became a prosperous body. It had considerable funds at its disposal, a portion of the profits of its exhibitions being set apart to enable its members, in succession, to make a special drawing—called the “Premium Drawing”—for the annual exhibition. Cox lived to receive a full share of these profits, averaging probably something near thirty pounds each time. The author has had repeated opportunities of witnessing the progress of these “premium drawings,” and some of them were very fine works indeed.

David Cox, on the whole, passed a very happy life whilst residing in the cottage at Dulwich, which he occupied for a period of about five years. Much of his time was spent in sketching from the surrounding scenery, and in making drawings of the picturesque views and objects which were to be found along the course of the Thames. He delighted in the wharves and old buildings, the piers and bridges, the varieties of water-craft lying at anchor, or crowding the river with life and interest. He loved to depict the noble towers of Westminster Abbey, and the stately trees of the Park. He strolled with keen delight along the river-banks towards the country, making studies among the green meadows studded with wild flowers and filled with

* The election took place in 1813.

browsing cattle, and taking note of the boats and barges, with sails trimmed to catch the breeze, which he beheld gliding along the silvery stream. He frequently wandered as far as Eton and Windsor, recording peeps of the College, and storing his portfolios with views of the Castle, which for him had ever a most powerful charm. It was whilst so occupied, industriously pursuing his art, that he had the very great misfortune to be "drawn" for the Militia. This event gave him the utmost concern, as it threatened to interfere seriously with his pursuits; and, moreover, he had an unconquerable aversion to any form of military life. But there appeared to be no way of escape for him; probably he had no means for purchasing a substitute; serve he therefore must. The day soon arrived on which he was to be sworn in. Listening at the foot of the office stairs before going up, he was terrified at the proceedings. There were a large number of persons who had been drawn like himself, and he heard all kinds of reasons assigned by the unwilling why they should be excused from service. A neighbour of his was one of these; and Cox distinctly heard him tell the most deliberate falsehood to get free, which had the desired effect, for his name was struck off the list. When Cox's turn came to be sworn in, he told the official what were his position and prospects; that it would be his utter ruin if he were taken from the pursuit of his art; and urged every reason he could think of why he should be released. All was of no avail; he was told that he *must* serve. This so exasperated Cox, that he exclaimed

to the officer, "You would have let *me* off if *I* had told you a lie," and then rushed from the place in disgust. He was now determined that he would not serve, and so he quitted his residence at once, hiding in various parts of the country, until he considered it fairly safe to venture back again. For a long time he was in constant dread of being apprehended as a deserter.

In his anxiety to improve his position—for during his residence at Dulwich his struggles for a subsistence had been many and trying—he was induced to apply for the appointment of drawing-master at the Military College at Farnham, a post then vacant. This appointment he obtained; but, in consequence, he was compelled to break up his pleasant country home, to send his wife to her mother, and his son to his father in Birmingham, and go into residence at the College. This was a mortification to him, but he resolved to endure it, if possible, for a time. His remuneration was good; he took rank as captain, with a servant to wait upon him; those he associated with were gentlemanlike companions; and several of his pupils greatly distinguished themselves in after life. The illustrious Sir William Napier, author of the "History of the Peninsular War," was one of those who acquired their knowledge of drawing from David Cox. This appointment promised in no long time to become more lucrative. Cox was esteemed by the Governor, and much liked by the officers whom he instructed. But he soon tired of the dulness of the daily routine, and chafed at the restraint put upon his movements. He felt that

he was altogether in a wrong position, and longed for freedom ; desiring with feverish eagerness to return to his old pursuits—to range wherever he pleased over the pleasant fields, by the brook and river-sides, or down the sweet green lanes, which he had so often traversed in search of subjects for his pencil. There was that in his looks which indicated to those about him that he was ill at ease ; and the Governor inquired if anything could be done to make him more comfortable ; but Cox assured Sir Howard Douglas that he could never be happy in his situation, and that he must leave the College. With much regret, his resignation was accepted ; in a short time he bade adieu to friends and pupils at Farnham, and betook himself to more congenial pursuits. On reviewing his life at the College during the twelve months of his residence there, he felt that on the whole it had rendered him service, in strengthening, by its disciplinary rules and regulations, his mind and character ; his time had therefore by no means been thrown away. Besides, he had been enabled to put by a little money out of the payment received, which was extremely useful to him, providing a fund on which to draw for the support of those near and dear until some favourable turn of affairs brought him prosperity. He at once, on leaving the College, rejoined his wife at her mother's house in London, and for the next twelve months busied himself in sketching, as before, and in making finished drawings for exhibition and sale.

After the lapse of about a year Cox began to look

about for some source of permanent income, for the mere sale of drawings was insufficient. An advertisement in one of the London papers attracted him. A lady who kept a girls' school in the city of Hereford was in want of a master to teach her pupils drawing. A salary of £100 a year was offered, with the opportunity of teaching elsewhere, and of taking private pupils, when the master's services were not required at the school. Cox thought this situation would exactly suit him. Besides reasons economical and domestic, which at that time had great weight with him, he knew that he should at Hereford be in the midst of most beautiful scenery, which would be of the greatest advantage to him, and also that he should be near to his beloved Wales, which had the strongest hold on his affections. He accordingly wrote to the lady, who came up to London for an interview. She approved of his specimens—liked his appearance and manners—and being quite satisfied as to his character and respectability, he was engaged to fill the situation. So, as soon as the necessary arrangements could be made, towards the close of the year 1814 to Hereford he went.*

* The lady was a Miss Croucher: the school was called the Gate House, situate in Widemarsh Street.—ED.

CHAPTER III.

1814 to 1827.

Residence at Hereford, and Work done there—Drawing-books published—
Views of the City of Bath—Illustrations for the “History of Warwickshire”
—First Trip to the Continent.

Cox's removal to Hereford was an important step in his life. The first thing he had to do on arriving in that city was to choose a house; but his means being scanty at that time (in fact, he had to accept a loan from a kind pupil—a lady—to enable him to remove from London) he was compelled to fix on a dwelling of a very unpretending description. The cottage he selected was one he had seen on a previous visit to Hereford. It was very picturesque—pretty to look at—just such an one as an artist would like to paint, but it was situated at the edge of a wood, a considerable distance from the city, which was very inconvenient in many respects, and moreover, had stone floors, which were found to be cold, and were sometimes damp. Cox passed the first winter in this humble abode, and was glad when the dreary season had gone by. He used to say that in wild weather, when the stormy winds were rushing through the trees at the back of the house, especially in the dead of the night, his sensations were anything but cheering. So soon as spring arrived he looked out for another dwelling

place, and eventually found one more to his mind, a good deal nearer the city. There he stayed a year or two, and then removed to a cottage which he liked much better, and which, from the name of the owner, he called Parry's Cottage, situated in a pleasant lane, very quiet, and very pretty. The rent was low, and the accommodation somewhat limited, but Cox, by agreement with the landlord, spent some money in additions and improvements—a larger room in which to paint, was one of the additions—and made the cottage more suitable to his requirements. It had a thatched roof, which added to its picturesque appearance, and the garden attached to it was of a fair size, and well stocked with fruit trees. This was a great attraction to Cox, who always loved a good garden, and he spent his leisure time in it much to his satisfaction. In the front of the house was a small garden also, which was filled with flowers of the kinds that Cox most cared for, and these in summer made a beautiful show. In this pleasant habitation the artist continued to reside until he had saved sufficient money to build a house of his own.

David Cox entered on his duties at the Ladies' School almost as soon as he arrived in Hereford; and then commenced a long period of fagging and hard work. His time not being fully occupied with the school pupils, he took an engagement as drawing master at the Hereford Grammar School, which appointment he held, although the remuneration was small, for several years. He also taught at schools in some of

the neighbouring towns, besides receiving private pupils to whom he gave lessons, amongst them being a young man of the name of Ince, who became, in after years, an artist of some repute. In this way he toiled on for a long time, often heart-sick and weary of his task, but he was slowly making a little money, and feeling his way to a more prosperous condition. His long walks to and from the places where he taught drawing, frequently caused him much fatigue, and at one time he was induced to buy a pony in order to save his legs. He often amused his friends by describing the freaks of this pony, which previously had belonged to an apothecary, and was accustomed to go rounds with the lad who took out the medicines to residences in the neighbourhood. Having so many times been employed on this business he knew the connection well, and needed no intimation where to stop. This knowledge had not forsaken the pony when Cox became his owner; and when the drawing-master mounted him to go to his teaching, he fancied that he was taking out medicines still. Accordingly, often during the journey he pulled up short at somebody's door, where he had been used to deliver the pills and lotions, and his rider had much difficulty in getting him to proceed. On one occasion, Cox was actually obliged to dismount, hitch the bridle on to a gate, and make a pretence of going up to the house before the pony could be persuaded to budge another inch. These erratic movements did not altogether suit his new owner, who occasionally was near losing his seat, whenever unexpectedly the pony

dashed off at a tangent from the direct course ; and consequently he was disposed of, and Cox resolved to walk as before.

The scenery around Hereford was a source of great delight to Cox. Early and late, whenever opportunity offered, he busied himself in sketching. In the fertile meadows that skirted the beautiful rivers Lugg and Wye, he might have been seen, almost any day during fine weather, plying his industrious pencil. These studies made a lasting impression upon him. His mind was stored with the most captivating images, incidents, and effects, often recurring in after years to his recollection, to be made use of again and again, and always with renewed pleasure. The city itself attracted him greatly ; it afforded many picturesque subjects : quaint old houses, and quiet street views, which he drew with much effect. He also occasionally made excursions down the Wye, and obtained subjects for drawings, which he elaborated for sale in the exhibitions, and to the London dealers. Some of these were very good for the period at which they were produced, but they did not always find ready purchasers. Money, at the close of the great French war, was not abundant ; and the artist had not then discovered his strength, or acquired the command over colour and effect which afterwards established his fame. Wales—dear old Wales!—being near at hand, frequently enticed him over the border into her pleasant valleys and her grand mountain ranges. There he worked hard, always returning from his excursions with his portfolios filled with sketches and

memoranda for future use. The finished results of these studies he every year carried to London, as there was little demand for them in Hereford, and disposed of them to his former patrons, or in the exhibitions of his society. Some he sold on his way to town, in Birmingham, staying for a short time with his old friends the Everitts, or with Mr. William Radclyffe, the engraver. The following letter, addressed to the latter gentleman, is interesting, as showing the difficulty Cox had in disposing of his drawings of a larger size, which at that time the art-loving public were by no means eager to possess, moderate as was their price. Mention is likewise made in the letter of the cottage Cox was then about to build at Hereford on some freehold land he had purchased :

Hereford, June 19th, 1824.

DEAR RADCLYFFE,—I was greatly disappointed you did not extend your journey to Hereford when at Cheltenham ; such another chance may not occur for a great length of time. And to get you to leave your business at Birmingham to come over purposely, is quite out of my expectation. However, I must forgive you this time, but it is quite as much as I can, and perhaps you will make amends, and come over this summer. I wish you would say as much ; it would give me great pleasure, I assure you. . . . I am much gratified with your approval of my works that are in the exhibition. It is some consolation ; though to have sold them would have been much more agreeable. You ask me the price I should charge to you. [This was for a large-size drawing then being exhibited.] I am sorry to tell you that I put it into the exhibition at so low a price, thinking by that of making sale certain, that I cannot sell it for less than £35 ; the price in the room is 35 guineas. If I had supposed it would not have sold, I would have asked 60 guineas ; but I could not live at the price I have asked, and shall make but few large draw-

ings, on account of the few purchasers. I intend to make small drawings, and perhaps one large each year, as the Society have voted me the premium of thirty guineas for next exhibition, and I must, of course, be thinking of a subject. Perhaps you can suggest one to me. I will make you a few small drawings this summer, and send them over for your selection. I have none by me, and have orders for more than my leisure time will allow of my making between now and Christmas. That comes of exhibiting in London, or else it would not answer; but I will attend to making you some soon. I hope you may like the small drawing sent, and hope it will be in good time. I preferred making it in colours, and would have made one in sepia also, but had not time, for since my return I have had to make up loss with my pupils, by giving them double lessons.

This week I shall lay the first stone of my cottage. I have already got the foundation dug out, and the well-sinkers have got five yards down, three of which are stone, and very tiresome, but hope they will overcome all obstacles, and finish it in six or eight weeks. My house I hope also to have roofed in in ten weeks, so that you will find that it is small, but it will be large enough to receive a friend at any time; and I shall have a painting-room nineteen feet by thirteen feet and ten feet in height. This room is my principal object for building, as where I now live is so small that every drawing I make is made in a small parlour where we take our meals, and see any one that calls. I hope to see Birmingham this summer, perhaps in a few weeks, when I hope to find yourself, Mrs. Radclyffe, and family, quite well. . . . Pray how goes on the "Warwickshire?" [An illustrated work then in hand, for which Mr. Radclyffe was engraving the plates, and Cox had been engaged to make some of the drawings.] I did not see any other number out when I was in town. Are all the subjects disposed of yet? If you should have occasion to write to me again soon, say how the arts go on in Birmingham; or any news you can collect.

Believe me, dear Radclyffe, yours truly,

DAVID COX.

Whilst in London, during his annual visits, Cox embraced the opportunity of giving a few lessons to

some of his former pupils, who were glad to avail themselves of his assistance, and by so doing increased his income. By persevering industry he was enabled in a few years to carry out the project on which he had long set his affections—viz., to build himself a house after his own mind. Finding himself in sufficient funds to accomplish this object, he determined on making his own designs, and erecting a pretty little cottage on some land he had purchased in a delightful situation just at the edge of the city, on the brow of an eminence called Ailstone Hill. This cottage residence (a drawing of which the author has seen) was designed with all an artist's taste for the picturesque. It had a thatched roof overhanging the walls, with a verandah, also thatched, and running nearly round the building, about which were trailed roses and flowering creeping-plants. There was a carriage-drive at front, in the midst of which stood an ash, that gave its name to the house—"Ash-tree House;"—and behind was a garden of fair dimensions, in course of time doubtless well filled with good things for the table. Trees of various kinds clustered at the back of the cottage, around the garden sides, and in summer-time made a pleasant shadow with their leaves. Altogether it was a very charming abode, admired by all who passed it. On Cox quitting Hereford for good, not more than two years after he had completed the cottage, he met with a ready purchaser for it at the sum of nearly one thousand pounds. No doubt he spent a very happy time in his new habitation. He was visited occasionally by old and esteemed friends

from Birmingham—Mr. Edward Everitt and Mr. W. Radclyffe—both of whom purchased some of his works, and went on sketching excursions with him in the neighbouring district, adown the Wye, and in other parts of the country. From his own experience of such journeys in after years, the writer knows this must have been for Cox a happy time indeed.

It was during his residence at Hereford that David Cox published, for the use of art students, two books of lessons, illustrated by himself. Some of the drawings were in outline only, for beginners; some were in imitation of sepia or Indian ink; whilst others showed his method of working in colours. These works were brought out by Messrs. Fuller of London, and were considered amongst the best of their kind. The first that was published was entitled, “A Treatise on Landscape Painting and Effect in Water Colours.” It was followed several years afterwards by another work, entitled, “The Young Artist’s Companion or Drawing Book.”* Many of the illustrations are very excellent, and the plates were etched by Cox’s own hand. At the present time copies of the first issue of these publications are sold for considerable sums. Doubtless both these works were found of great service to students, as the Messrs. Fuller published a second edition of them—or of the first of them—after a while. Such of the plates

* The former of these works was published in 1814, and the latter in 1825; both by Messrs. Fuller, of Rathbone Place. They also published the “Views of Bath,” in 1820. In 1840, the same publishers issued a new edition of the “Landscape Painting;” but Cox made no new drawings for it.—ED.

as were worn were re-touched, and the work was brought out in monthly numbers. In the literary part Cox was assisted by some one more experienced than himself; the writer is under the impression that he said it was "by a clergyman."

Cox also made, whilst in Hereford, a series of six drawings, "Views of the City of Bath," which were engraved and published also by Messrs. Fuller. These drawings, for the period at which they were executed, were exceedingly clever. One of them, "A View of the Town Hall and Abbey," has been in the author's possession; and another, "The Pump Room," he has seen, and considers a very skilful work. There are numerous figures in it, giving a good idea of the people who frequented that fashionable watering-place at the commencement of the present century. This series was brought out about the year 1817, and the artist received from the publishers the very modest sum of four guineas each drawing. Cox also drew some of the public buildings and quaint old houses of Hereford, which were lithographed or etched by himself. The Town Hall, with a number of figures at the front, is especially good. He was rather partial to soft-ground etching, and worked skilfully on the copperplate. It is also probable, though not definitely ascertained, that he occasionally painted in oil whilst at Hereford. The author has seen a picture of Worcester Cathedral, with the adjoining houses, the river Severn in front, boats and barges moored to the side, and a figure swimming across the water; all very characteristic of Cox's manner at that period, and which

he believes to be an early production of the artist. It is somewhat hard, smooth, and precise, but bears unmistakable signs of having come from his hand.

Some little time before Cox left Hereford an illustrated account of Warwickshire was projected by a firm of publishers in Birmingham (Messrs. Knott), for which work he and other artists—De Wint, Harding, W. Westall, J. V. Barber, and one or two more—were engaged to make the necessary drawings. The descriptive letterpress was written by Mr. Hamper, F.S.A., an antiquary of note then living in Birmingham. The drawings executed by Cox and De Wint—with one exception entirely in sepia—are very beautiful, and are by far the best of the series. Cox's old friend, Mr. William Radclyffe, engraved the plates. A few years since, the entire series of drawings was purchased by subscription, and presented for safe keeping to the Birmingham and Midland Institute. Mr. C. W. Radclyffe, son of the engraver, states that it was through the instrumentality of his father that Cox obtained the commission to make some of the drawings for this "History," and that the artist's remuneration was not more than a guinea for each drawing. An exquisite drawing in colours, "A Street Scene, Warwick," with the Court-house, a crowd of suitors in front, and lawyers in their robes and wigs standing amongst them, is now worth all the money the entire series cost! The following letter contains a reference to two of the illustrations, which were despatched to the engraver a few days before Cox quitted Hereford for London:—

Hereford, January 22, 1827.

DEAR RADCLYFFE,—I have enclosed the “High Street, Birmingham,” and small sepia of “Guy’s Cliff Avenue,” which latter I beg to present, and hope it may answer. I have also enclosed a letter to Mr. Thos. Knott for my money, with a request that he will send it this week, as I quit my house next Monday, and wish to get off to London as soon as the sale is over. But before I leave I must beg to trouble you. I have had an accident with the stained-glass window, nearly the whole of the panes being broken in the late high winds, and I must replace them, so as to leave the house as I sold it. I must therefore trouble you to order me panes to the following sizes, and as near to the colour sent. There is a person lives opposite “Wilday’s Hotel,” where you can order it, with a request that he will pack it safely, but if he should think there would be a risk in sending the larger panes, tell him to send off the smaller immediately by coach. I remember once calling on the above person, who told me it was 5s. per foot, but I must have it, and I hope you will excuse the liberty I have taken in making so urgent a request on your valuable time, but as I have before stated, I must leave the house on Monday next, and also leave it in the state in which I sold it.

I have this moment recollected that I ought to have made a sketch of some ducks, but I think if it is to be altered [alluding probably to the drawing of “High Street, Birmingham,” with the market-folk and their poultry-stalls, then forwarded to Mr. Radclyffe to be engraved] you can do it, and I will touch upon the proof. I still think there can be no objection to the table with the dead poultry.

Yours very truly, in haste,

D. Cox.

During the summer of 1826, the year before Cox left Hereford, he was induced, in company with his brother-in-law and young David, his son, to make an excursion to the Continent. The party crossed the Channel to Calais, where they stayed a short time,

and thence went on to Brussels. In that city Cox made numerous sketches. He also made a pilgrimage to the field of Waterloo, to see the spot where, a few years previously, mighty forces had striven for mastery, and the fate of Napoleon was sealed. During his stay at Brussels he accidentally fell in with some old Hereford friends, named Hopton, who were travelling on the Continent, and was persuaded to accompany them in their carriage to many places of interest they were desirous of seeing. Young David was sent home with his relative, and Cox, with his friends, visited some of the chief cities of Belgium and Holland. His pencil was by no means idle during this pleasant excursion. The ladies of the family had been his pupils at Hereford, and were as much interested in art-work as their master. Cox returned home with his sketch-books filled with useful memoranda for future drawings of great interest and importance, some of which he contributed to the Water-Colour Society's exhibitions.

Among the friends to whom Cox was warmly attached during his sojourn in the old cathedral city was Mr. Charles Spozzi, manager of the Old Bank in Hereford. The writer had the pleasure of knowing this gentleman, and has heard him speak of Mr. Cox with great respect and esteem. Mr. Spozzi had often rendered small services to Cox, and also to his servant, Ann Fowler, in the disposal of her savings, for which both Ann and her master felt very grateful. Ann Fowler went into Mr. Cox's service when quite a girl, and lived with him until his death, when far advanced

in years. Cox always enjoined upon his domestics the desirability of putting something by from their wages against old age and a "rainy day." Ann Fowler acted upon this advice, and invested her surplus cash, under the direction of Mr. Spozzi, in the Hereford Savings Bank, until at length she had at command a very respectable sum. The following letter, written many years after Cox left Hereford, will show his thoughtfulness for those about him, and also that he did not forget kindnesses rendered to him in early days:—

Greenfield House, Harborne, near Birmingham,

January 19, 1850.

MY DEAR SIR,—I see from the Hereford paper a notice to the following effect:—"Attendance will be given at the office of the Hereford Savings Bank every Saturday during the month of January, 1850, between the hours of ten and eleven in the forenoon, and every Monday evening between the hours of six and seven, for the purpose of the depositors' books being made up and examined to the 20th of November last." As my servant cannot attend at this time, and you were so kind as to say you would undertake a little business of this kind for her, she begs that I would write and ask you this favour, to have her book (which I now enclose) examined, and the interest added. She had some thought of taking her deposit out of the Savings Bank this Christmas, and placing it in the Three Per Cents.; but as the price of Consols is so very high, and perhaps Ministers may contemplate some change, I advise her to wait a short time before she removes it.

I have painted a small picture, in oil, but as it is not quite dry, I will not send it off until Monday, and shall beg that you will accept it for "auld lang syne." I trust that Mrs. Spozzi and yourself are in good health, as this leaves your obliged and faithful

DAVID COX.

To Charles Spozzi, Esq., Hereford.

Not very long after Cox returned from his Continental tour he began seriously to meditate a removal to London. He had now been resident in the country for something like thirteen years, and felt that he should greatly like a change. He was anxious to fix his abode among the members of his profession, and to be nearer the purchasers and collectors of works of art. He also thought that he should be able to make more money by teaching in London, having excellent prospects of extending his connection among the wealthier classes through the agency of his former pupils. Above all, he had the interests of his son at heart, and considered that his chances of success as an artist would be materially increased by a removal at once to the metropolis. It was exactly at this juncture that a West Indian planter, who had realised a fortune at Berbice, returned to his native town of Hereford, and was looking about for a residence, intending to settle there for the rest of his life.* Whilst strolling around the suburbs he was attracted by Cox's pretty little cottage, and thought it was the very place he should like to possess. He immediately made overtures to purchase it; the owner wanted to sell; the price was agreed on without demur, and the money paid. In the settlement there were a few shillings to be returned to the planter from the sum paid down. Cox searched his pockets to find the necessary coin, when the new owner exclaimed, "Never mind the change, Mr. Cox! you can give me

* This gentleman's name was Reynolds. He changed the name of the house to Berbice Villa.—ED.

five or six of your little drawings for the balance !”
“And he really meant what he said,” Cox told his friends when narrating the story. Such was the low monetary value which the wealthy planter set on works of art !

Having thus disposed of his house, and made all other necessary arrangements, Cox, with his family, at the beginning of the year 1827, bade a final adieu to the old City of Hereford.

CHAPTER IV.

1827 to 1841.

Return to London, and Second Residence there—Professional Pursuits—Another Continental Trip—Sketching Excursions into Yorkshire, Derbyshire, to the Lakes, and Elsewhere—Takes Lessons in Oil-painting from W. Müller—Quits London for Harborne, near Birmingham.

ALTHOUGH David Cox, after his thirteen years' continuous residence in the country, felt an ardent desire for a change of scene, a return to town life, in order to mingle more frequently with his artistic brethren, and to push his fortunes with greater success, he was nevertheless conscious of the immense benefit which, as a landscape painter, he had received from the knowledge acquired during that time of the varied appearances and effects of Nature, through changing seasons, and amidst the beautiful scenery of the district where he had so long resided; and likewise of the characters, incidents, occupations, and diversified operations of rural life, which had daily met his observation in traversing the country. Consequently, he returned to London, not only physically invigorated by constant exercise in fresh pure air, but with his mind stored and enriched with a myriad of delightful images and recollections, which, added to the treasures of his portfolios, were of incalculable advantage to him in his future career.

With the savings he had made, and something like a thousand pounds, for which he had sold his cottage, in his pocket, he once more returned to the metropolis to reside. He took a house in the Foxley Road, Kennington, which he continued to inhabit for a period of fourteen years. There he commenced teaching drawing in good earnest, and soon had work enough of this kind. Many of his old pupils again rallied round him, giving him introductions to others who were desirous of receiving lessons, so that in a short time he began to make money sufficient for his modest wants. He was sought after far and near; was applied to by members of the aristocracy and upper classes at the West End, and ere long was enabled to raise his terms. Eventually he received a guinea for a single lesson. Thus the foundations of his fortune were laid. By teaching, and by the sale of drawings, he acquired money rapidly, occasionally obtaining, to him, considerable sums, for works made as lessons for his pupils. He has said that many a time, when he has knocked at a pupil's door, to give a lesson, he has not had the faintest conception of what he should do as an example, but that, when he had taken his seat to begin, colours, paper, and pencils before him, an idea had suddenly flashed across his mind, of some effect previously seen, which, coupled with a well-remembered subject, he dashed upon the paper, the result surprising even himself. On leaving, he received a guinea for the lesson, and afterwards sold the drawing for a sum of perhaps five or ten pounds. His drawings sold at that time much more readily than

they had done during the early years of his residence at Hereford, because he had acquired greater skill as an artist, and had become better known by frequently exhibiting in the Society's Gallery in London; also because money was more abundant, and the country generally had settled down, after the trials and troubles consequent upon the long war.

Five or six years after the publication of the "History of Warwickshire," Cox received from Messrs. Wrightson and Webb, booksellers, of Birmingham, a commission to furnish a number of drawings to illustrate a work they proposed to publish, entitled "Wanderings in North and South Wales," the descriptive part to be written by Thomas Roscoe, of Liverpool. This interesting work was brought out at considerable cost. Cox, Creswick, Cattermole, Copley Fielding, and other artists, supplied the drawings, which were admirably engraved by Mr. William Radclyffe. David Cox furnished fully half the illustrations, which were very beautiful, and for which he received in payment the modest sums of four and five guineas each, discharging his own travelling expenses, in those days by no means light. This work, published in two volumes, has been deservedly popular. Cox, it is said, was again indebted to his friend Mr. Radclyffe for the commission he received to execute drawings for this work, and it was with some reluctance that the publishers consented to employ him, as his name was not considered in those days of importance. They insisted on other artists being associated

with him in the production of the illustrations, as the public would be more likely to purchase the book, and the outlay be more readily covered. Those who possess a copy of this charming work will agree that the illustrations supplied by David Cox are by far the best; indeed, it is because of his work that the book is still eagerly sought from the second-hand booksellers. The second portion of the work, "Wanderings and Excursions in South Wales," did not appear until some time after the first part had been published, probably a twelvemonth or more. In the interim, Messrs. Wrightson and Webb must have discovered that the name of David Cox was of greater consequence to them in promoting the sale of their first volume than they had supposed it would have been, for in a note at the close of the chapter descriptive of Raglan Castle, in the "South Wales" volume, they say: "It may not be amiss here to mention the obligations which the proprietors of this work are under to that highly-esteemed artist and faithful delineator of scenery, Mr. David Cox, whose pencil has enriched and enhanced the value not only of this volume, but also of that recently published on the Northern part of the Principality." This is singular. There is now not a word about Fielding, Creswick, Harding, and the rest; and yet, but a few months before, the publishers reluctantly employed Cox in the first instance.

David Cox had resided in London about a couple of years after his return from Hereford, when it occurred to him that he should much like to revisit the Continent

for a little sketching, and get a complete change of subjects from those which his own country had afforded him. He therefore made arrangements, and started in company with his son, landing, as before, at Calais. There he made drawings of all the objects that were picturesque and interesting, particularly of the pier, crowded with people—fishermen and others—in their gay costumes—a subject he was extremely fond of, and which he many times repeated. Fort Rouge also was treated by him, under various effects, and made an admirable subject in his hands. The author has seen one drawing of Fort Rouge as luminous as Turner could have made it in his best days; the sky glowing with sunshine, and the blue water sparkling with brilliant morning light. From Calais he journeyed on to Paris, sketching most of the public buildings and other objects of interest on his route. He made several fine drawings of Amiens Cathedral. The bridges over the Seine afforded him excellent subjects; likewise the Tuileries, and many other of the public buildings in the capital of France. He worked most industriously, and brought home a large number of brilliant and interesting studies, from which he afterwards made finished drawings, which enhanced his reputation as an artist, and especially as an architectural draughtsman. Shortly after his arrival in Paris, he unluckily met with an accident, spraining his ankle in descending some stairs, which compelled him to go about the city in a vehicle in search of subjects for his pencil, many of which he drew whilst seated in the carriage. This accident rather

hastened his departure home ; but his stay, nevertheless, was of several weeks' duration.

He has told the writer of this Memoir an amusing story of his difficulties respecting dinner when in Paris. Having always had a preference for plain diet and simple living, he could not enjoy the French cookery, being ignorant of the constituents of the various dishes set before him ; in fact, he sometimes, during that visit, did not make more than half a meal. Calling one day at a restaurant, and looking over the bill of fare, he observed with delight that "calves' head" was one of the dishes for dinner. This discovery gave him sincere pleasure, for he knew what "calves' head" was, and, moreover, had always been very fond of it. At all events, there was nothing mysterious or doubtful about *that* dish ; it was a plain, simple, unsophisticated, and well-known English viand. He ordered some of it for dinner, and enjoyed it vastly. Next day, and for several days in succession, he visited the same restaurant to dine, and invariably ordered "calves' head," much to the surprise of the waiter. On one of these occasions alas ! as he was turning the delicious morsels on his plate, he perceived—and the knife and fork almost fell from his hands as he made the discovery—several little teats and one or two small bristles on the meat he was eating with such a relish ! and then a light suddenly flashed across his mind, convincing him that what he had been partaking of, day after day, with such pleasing confidence, as "calves' head"—thoroughly enjoying it, because he knew what he was eating—was, after all,

nothing but a portion of the belly of a small pig! His disgust knew no bounds at having been so deceived, and he never entered the place again.

Cox paid one more visit to the Continent for a short time, but did not care to repeat the experiment afterwards. He resolved to be quite content with what he could find of the picturesque in England and in his beloved Wales. Listening, one day, after the lapse of many years, to a conversation between two brother artists, one of whom was descanting on the beauties of Switzerland, and endeavouring to persuade the other to visit that romantic country on a sketching tour, Cox, who, on this occasion, could speak freely without giving offence, interrupted them with the remark, "Bother to Switzerland! Wales is quite good enough for *me*, and I am sure it is for *him*!" That he was, however, much pleased with many of the subjects and incidents he met with during his Continental rambles, the fine drawings he made and exhibited sufficiently prove; but home scenes had for him a charm infinitely greater. In English and Welsh scenery he found his highest enjoyment and his truest field of labour.

Not very long after his return to London from Hereford—two or three years, perhaps—David Cox started on a sketching excursion into Yorkshire, influenced, probably, in some measure, by the recommendation of his friend, Mr. William Roberts, of Birmingham, a native of that county, and himself a very able artist, who had always a great affection for Yorkshire scenery. He took up his quarters near

Bolton Abbey, and made many excellent drawings of the picturesque old ruin, and of subjects he found on the river Wharfe. This was a favourite locality with Cox; he visited it again and again, and never tired of painting the Abbey, in various aspects and under different effects, both in water and in oil. Bolton Park afforded him many good subjects. His water-colour drawings made from sketches at Bolton, or in the neighbourhood, are numerous, and many of them exceedingly fine. On other occasions he visited Kirkby Lonsdale, in Cumberland; Bardon Tower, and elsewhere, in Yorkshire. The latter (Bardon Tower) was a favourite subject, often repeated, with variations, and from different points of view. One of the last and grandest drawings he made was of this subject—solemn and low in tone, powerful in colour and effect, and full of poetical feeling. One of his Kirkby Lonsdale subjects—a fine, impressive work—hung for some time in his usual sitting-room at Greenfield House, Harborne. It was a moorland scene, wild and grand; huge blocks of stone lying in the foreground, and a man leading a rough pony along the rugged path in front, driving a few sheep before him, and raising his arm (it may be presumed his voice also) to make them proceed on their way. This drawing was in a somewhat incomplete state, but the essential features had been put in with much effect. It was entitled “The Missing Flock.”

Another season Cox changed his ground, and made a journey into Derbyshire. He wished to make a series of drawings from Haddon Hall and its surroundings,

and for this purpose stayed some time at that delightful old inn, the "Peacock," at Rowsley. There he was quite at home, being made as comfortable as he could desire by Mr. and Mrs. Severn, the landlord and landlady, of whom he always spoke with the warmest regard. The house itself must have been entirely after his own heart, as no one who has visited Rowsley will for a moment dispute. The writer once passed a very happy fortnight there, in "days gone by," and can bear testimony to the charms and comforts of the dear old inn. David Cox was especially attached by the scenery and subjects in the neighbourhood of Rowsley, and repeatedly paid visits to the place. He made many most exquisite drawings in that locality. The picturesque old water-mill, with the double wheels, on the little river Wye—renowned for its trout and grayling—almost opposite to the "Peacock," he many times depicted; it was a "pet" subject, and he painted it as though he loved it. Haddon Hall—his "dear old Haddon," as he often called it, was, of course, an inexhaustible treasure-house. He never could see enough of it. How frequently has that deserted mansion of the Vernons—its quaint old courts and picturesque terrace, with the crumbling grey-green steps leading down into the garden from the shady walk above—its wainscoted rooms and latticed windows—its time-stained walls and leafy surroundings—how often has it been portrayed by his loving hand! And the dear old church at Darley Dale, with its great and venerable yew in the green graveyard, and its back-

ground of lovely hills seen through the trees that encircle it with pleasant green—how many times has he transferred to paper the features of that delightful view ! In fact, the scenery of Yorkshire and Derbyshire had ever resistless attractions for David Cox ; the mouldering priory of Bolton—the stately castle of Bolsover—Hardwick Hall, with its numberless charms and treasures—and above all, his dear and favourite “ old Haddon ”—have furnished him with innumerable subjects for the display of his genius and the delight of every true lover of art.

Cox had never any very great affection for lake scenery. For some reason he did not care for large sheets of placid water as many artists do, and could not take sufficient interest in them to devote time and thought to the subjects they afforded. Occasionally he essayed his skill on one or two of the Welsh lakes—Bala and Tal-y-llyn, and perhaps Llyn Helsi, on the moors at the back of Bettws-y-coed. Llanberis lake, too, enticed him to depict its charms. But to the lakes of Westmoreland and Cumberland he was rarely drawn ; in all probability he did not visit them more than once for the purpose of sketching. He made an interesting drawing at Windermere, on some festive occasion ; but of Rydal Water, Grasmere, Derwentwater, Ulleswater, and the rest the author cannot call to mind a single transcript by him. Although he did not show much regard for large sheets of smooth water, he had a strong liking for vast stretches of unbroken sand on the sea-shore ; and the sands of Ulverstone and Lancaster often drew him

across country to depict their characteristic charms. He loved those far-extending brown and yellow plains, spreading for miles when the sea had ebbed away, with their cavalcades of market people wending across the dangerous route, under varying effects of rain and cloud, shrouding fog or dazzling sunshine. Many a time and oft has he depicted them, both in water-colours and in oils ; and among them are to be found some of his happiest productions. The writer calls to mind a most lovely drawing of Lancaster Sands, of small dimensions, but full of light, splendour, and most beautiful colour. It is morning, the sun is up, and shedding a flood of glory on all beneath ; but a thick haze envelopes the distant land, and reaches far across the wide-spreading tract of ruddy sand, approaching within a hundred yards or so to the near shore. There is apparently a large cavalcade of travellers, some on horseback and some in carts, wending their way towards the spectator across the wet ground, full of bright reflections—a few partially enveloped in the fog, and some distinctly seen in the brilliant sunshine, whilst a man on horseback leads the way where the sand is safest, and with a bugle to his mouth indicates the track which the party is to follow. It is indeed a glorious drawing—luminous as any Turner, and in the artist's best and happiest manner. Cox himself prized this drawing highly. In his portfolio it was protected with tissue paper ; and not wishing to part with it, he put upon it a price which he thought would prevent any one purchasing it. In fact he asked as much as £18

for the drawing—a sum about £8 in advance of his usual charge for works of this size. Strange to say the extra price had the desired prohibitory effect, until a short time before the artist's death, when a purchaser was found who was too happy to be permitted to take it at what the artist thought the exorbitant price of £18 ! Shortly afterwards it passed into the fine collection of Mr. Newsham, of Preston, and probably no sum would purchase it now.

These sea-shore subjects are amongst the happiest, as to the painter they were amongst the best-beloved of his works. Whether on the coast of France, at Calais or Dieppe; or on our own English coast at Hastings or Ulverstone, or latterly at Rhyl, for which place he had a strong regard, probably on account of its long stretches of sea-sand, he was most successful in his renderings, and most delighted with his success. When at Lancaster, for the purpose of painting the sands of Morecambe Bay from Host Bank, Cox made various sketches about the city, particularly of the old castle on its commanding eminence, with the town at its foot, and its fine background of mountain ranges in the blue distance far away. From these studies he painted the famous picture, entitled "Lancaster Castle," with soldiers and baggage-wagons on the way, and reapers and a cornfield in front, gazing wonderingly at the troops as they march along. This fine picture—although not larger than 24 by 18 inches—brought at the sale of the Gillott collection (in consequence of two eminent dealers having unlimited commissions to pur-

chase it for respective clients) something like 3,000 guineas. It was originally presented by the artist to an old friend who fell in love with it. This gentleman kept it in his possession several years, until he had forgotten how he came by it, or, at all events, until he was one day hard pressed for money, and meditated selling the picture. Meeting the artist accidentally, he said, "Mr. Cox, I've got a picture of your painting. I am short of money at this time. Should you mind if I sold 'Lancaster Castle?'" "Oh, not at all," replied Cox; "sell it to *me*. If you remember, I *gave* it to you!" This took the owner somewhat aback; but the end of it was that Cox purchased his own present from his friend, and gave the sum of twenty pounds for the picture. He afterwards sold it for the same price.

During the remainder of David Cox's sojourn in London, he continued to work very industriously, making and exhibiting a large number of drawings, giving lessons to his pupils, which brought him in a good annual income, and occasionally painting in oil, a medium in which, after many attempts, he now desired to make a serious effort. He had produced several pictures of considerable merit, which his friends thought well of, and which gave promise of future excellence; he was therefore determined to make an effort to succeed as a painter in oils, and with his usual decision of character, set energetically to work to accomplish his object. As, when he commenced painting in water-colours, he thought it desirable to be put at starting in the right way, and applied to

John Varley for instruction, so he now considered that it would be advantageous to procure from some master-hand a little advice and assistance as to manipulation and the management of colours, &c., which would help him in the practice of oil-painting. Accordingly, he obtained an introduction to Mr. W. G. Müller, who, after his return from Greece and Egypt, had set up his easel in London, and obtained from him a few lessons, which doubtless were of service, as to the proper method of working in the unfamiliar vehicle. Cox was a great admirer of the works of Müller, and thought the young artist then, and ever afterwards, a man of extraordinary ability. On his first visit, Müller very kindly began a picture before him, and painted with such ease and rapidity, that Cox was astonished, for the picture—one of moderate size—was carried a great way towards completion when the new pupil took his leave.* Müller

* An amusing anecdote has been told of William Müller, by an artist residing at the time in North Wales, which, as it illustrates the ease and rapidity with which he painted his pictures, is worth preserving. The narrator of this story had made a journey to Conway, for the purpose of sketching cottage interiors, of which he knew several fine subjects in the place. Whilst he was sitting one evening shortly after his arrival in the parlour of the little inn, at which he had taken up his quarters, a stranger entered the room, took a seat by the fire, and soon began a conversation with our friend. They talked of art; and the stranger, who said he came from London, and painted a little himself, inquired if there were any subjects of a picturesque character in that neighbourhood on which he could try his hand. His dress was so peculiar, and his general appearance so unlike that of a professional artist out upon a sketching excursion, that the narrator believed him to be an amateur painter—a small tradesman, or clerk, perhaps, in some city establishment—taking his holiday, and bent on amusing himself by doing a little sketching. He even thought it not impossible (the costume of the stranger was so odd and unsuitable for rambling about in, and his manner altogether so re-

could work with either hand equally well, and when one became tired, he would put the brush in the other, and dash away on his canvas with the same facility as before. It has been said that when working on a picture of large dimensions, he has often had a palette strapped upon each arm, and both hands filled with brushes plentifully charged with the pigments he was using. On the following day, when Cox called for a second lesson, great was his astonishment on finding that Müller had in the interval obliterated a great

markable) that the new-comer might be a tailor with artistic tendencies, from some West End house, on a trip in search of health as well as the picturesque. It was not long before the stranger gathered that there were in the place some exceedingly fine cottage-interior subjects which he had come there to paint; and saying that he himself was very fond of subjects of the kind, asked if he might be permitted to go and see them. On the following morning he was introduced to a "splendid interior," which both agreed to paint; and, taking up their stations a little apart, they very soon began operations. The artist sketched his subject very carefully upon the canvas, laid out his colours, and put on a few tints here and there, just to feel his way; and after working for about an hour, occasionally looking over the top of his picture towards his companion, who was sticking to his task, apparently not much disturbed by the difficulties of the subject, he rose from his seat to ascertain how the "tailor" (as he thought him to be) was progressing. He fully expected to see a poor daub, out of perspective, and vile in colour and drawing. What was his astonishment on discovering that the "tailor" had nearly finished his picture, while his own was only a little more than commenced! And such a picture it was! Such splendid colour! so masterly in the handling! the drawing of every detail so perfect! the figures introduced with such skill, and the whole so effective! He was rendered quite speechless as he stood gazing at the marvellous work. At length he found words to exclaim, "Well! you *have* astonished me! I did not think you could paint anything fit to be seen! Why, you are a most able artist! May I inquire your name?" The person addressed quietly responded, "My name is Müller." "Oh!" replied the other, with a groan of contrition, "why didn't you tell me that before? I took you for a *tailor*!"

portion of his previous day's work, and had made considerable progress with another subject on the same canvas. In answer to Cox's look of surprise, Müller said, "I did not like the subject I worked at yesterday, and have rubbed most of it out. This, I think, is better." He had commenced his fine picture, entitled the "Baggage-Wagon," exhibited some years afterwards in the International Exhibition; and, in fact, it seemed to Cox to be well advanced towards completion with the single day's work. The next day Cox took his third and final lesson from that celebrated example of Müller's genius. Müller's lessons, however, never had the slightest effect in changing or modifying Cox's natural mode of recording his own ideas and impressions. He doubtless derived useful hints as to manipulation, and the "legitimate" method of laying on his colours, but the treatment of his subjects was always peculiarly his own. David Cox was no imitator of the works of other men, except on one or two special occasions. He thought for himself, and worked out his ideas in his own way. He put his own individuality into whatever he did, to stand for what it was worth. He never, when painting, asked himself the question, "How would Müller, or Turner, or any other master of the art, have treated this subject? I should like to make my work resemble his." He felt that although his way might not be the better way, it was the only way for him; that he could not accomplish what he desired in any other manner than that to which he was born. He has been heard

to say, when overlooking an artist at work upon some picture, "How carefully Mr. —— is painting those trees!" or, "How accurately he is representing those stones in the river-bed! Why, he is painting every stone! I shall never be able to paint like that! Well, well, I must work in my own clumsy way. My friends are kind enough to tell me they like my pictures, and I suppose I must rest contented." Then, with a few master-strokes, he proved that his friends had good reason to "like" his works.

Cox not only took lessons from Mr. Müller, but admired the productions of this artist so greatly as to purchase several for his own pleasure and study; and he further induced his friends in Birmingham, when he took up his abode there, to follow his example, by adding some of Müller's works to their collections. There was no jealousy in Cox's nature: if *he* had been hangman at the Royal Academy, Müller would have had due place, even if his own works had been forced to give way.

Cox made such satisfactory progress with his oil painting after he had received instruction from Mr. Müller that he began to meditate a change of residence to the country again, in order to give himself more entirely and uninterruptedly to the pursuit of that branch of the art. He had made a good deal of money by teaching, but was getting tired of the drudgery, and his son, by this time qualified to give lessons, was not unwilling to have some of the pupils transferred to him. Cox had a warmly attached friend in Birmingham, Mr.

W. Roberts, who was an admirable connoisseur, and likewise, as has been said, a very skilful artist, well acquainted with all the methods of painting in oils; and he had other excellent friends and admirers residing in or near the town, and these urged him to take up his residence in their neighbourhood. Besides, he felt that he was advancing in years, and possibly had a secret wish—the wish so many have felt—to end his days near the spot where he first drew the breath of life. However this may have been, he came to the determination that if a suitable habitation could be met with not far from his friends, Mr. Roberts and Mr. Birch, a picture collector and a man of refined taste, to whom he was much attached, he would quit London, and return to his native town. Fortunately, in no very long time, a convenient and pleasant house was found for him at Harborne, nearly opposite to the residences of his friends above-mentioned. In due course he took his departure from London, and entered into possession of his future abode, Greenfield House, Greenfield Lane, Harborne, about two miles and a half from Birmingham, where he continued to reside during the remainder of his life.

The author feels that in a Biography of David Cox, some account of Cox's old and esteemed friend, Mr. William Roberts—to whom he was indebted for much valuable advice and assistance when he commenced painting in oil at Harborne; who accompanied him on many of his sketching excursions; who was an enthusiastic admirer and purchaser of his works, and who was a patron of essential service to him in many ways—will not here be considered out of place. The following brief memoir, written by the author, appeared in *The Birmingham Post*, on the 30th

March, 1867, the day on which Mr. Roberts was buried. It may interest some friends who knew and esteemed him, and thought highly of his artistic abilities:—

“The grave ought not to close over the remains of our late much respected townsman, Mr. William Roberts, without some notice, however brief and inadequate, of a man remarkable in many ways, more particularly for his attachment to the fine arts, and for his great skill as a practitioner in the art which he loved, and which engrossed his affections from an early period to the close of a life of eighty years. Mr. Roberts was born at Darton, in Yorkshire. He was destined to commercial pursuits, and in course of time entered into partnership with the late Mr. Wilmott of Summer Row, in this town. The firm of Wilmott and Roberts was for many years known to most people in Birmingham engaged in business—and, indeed, all over the country—and their mercantile establishment stood as high as any in public estimation. Mr. Wilmott dying, the business for a number of years has been carried on successfully by Mr. Roberts alone. Mr. Roberts was from his youth always fond of painting and of the Society of Artists. His commercial pursuits frequently took him to Norwich, and there he formed an acquaintance with an artist whose productions he greatly admired, and whose name has now become famous—John Crome. Mr. Roberts also formed an intimacy with another artist of remarkable ability, residing in Norwich at that time—John Sell Cotman, the friend, and in some respects the model of Turner. The elder Stark, and Vincent, pupils of Crome, were also among the friends of Mr. Roberts at that period; their conversation, and the study of their works, contributed to form his taste and to develop his own ability as a painter. Many were the anecdotes, amusing and instructive, which he used to narrate of men and their doings, to which his friends have often listened with delighted attention. Still further to improve himself, Mr. Roberts took lessons from the celebrated water-colour painter, De Wint, whose genius he revered, and whose works he always extolled. Subsequently he became acquainted with a still greater artist—David Cox; acquaintance ripened into intimacy, and the two remained fast friends until the death of the latter in 1859. The works of David Cox exercised a powerful influence in forming the style of Mr. Roberts, whose drawings and paintings very much resemble those of Cox, and are not unfrequently mistaken for the works of that artist. The genius of the two men was very much akin. Both took broad and grand views of Nature, loved similar subjects and effects, and transcribed them on paper or canvas with bold suggestive strokes of the pencil. The productions of Mr. Roberts usually exhibit extraordinary ability, and it has often been remarked that had circumstances compelled him in early life to take up the profession of an artist, he must have attained to a high and distinguished position. With the

progress of the fine arts in Birmingham, Mr. Roberts has been identified from a very early period. He contributed pictures to the first exhibition of works of art opened in this town, and which was held in a room behind the Fire Offices in Union Street, in the year 1819. He joined the few artists residing in Birmingham at that time in making this exhibition, and became a member of the society then formed. He has contributed several of his latest works to the Exhibition of Water-Colour Drawings, open at the present time in New Street. The late David Cox had a high opinion of the artistic powers of Mr. Roberts, and of his information on all matters pertaining to the practice of painting in oil. It is a fact that he decided on coming from London to reside at Harborne, in order to be near his friend Roberts, from whom he expected to receive such hints on the *modus operandi* of painting in oil as would enable him to master the difficulties attending that branch of art, to which he was desirous of devoting his remaining years. We all know with what success the object was accomplished. The friends—who painted together; who rambled over the country in company, seeking subjects for the pencil; who spent many years of their lives in each other's society, or in the immediate neighbourhood of each other, cherishing a mutual and most affectionate regard—will not rest apart. To-day, the mortal remains of William Roberts will be laid near those of David Cox, in Harborne Churchyard; and the same hallowed soil will enclose all that is left of two men of kindred genius, who have left behind them many warm and attached friends that esteemed them living, and lament them dead."

CHAPTER V.

1841 to 1845.

Residence at Harborne—Artistic Pursuits—Sketching Trips into Yorkshire and Wales—Conway, Llanbedr, Bettws-y-coed—Death of Mrs. Cox.

DAVID COX (with Mrs. Cox and their servant Ann Fowler) arrived at his new abode, Greenfield House, about the middle of summer, 1841, he being then in his fifty-eighth year. He was delighted to leave far behind him the din and bustle of London, and get back once again to the quiet of the country. He had lived in town, since he left Hereford, for the long period of fourteen years, with only an occasional trip for sketching purposes, once or twice a year, to relieve the strain and monotony of his London life. He felt the yoke of a teacher of drawing to be galling him sorely; and although by carrying it so long and persistently he had been enabled materially to improve his circumstances, and to acquire a comfortable independency, still he was resolved to get rid of the burthen, and to pass the rest of his days in a manner more in accordance with his tastes and wishes. Not that the previous years of his life—with all their cares, and all the plodding industry they entailed, often weary and sick at heart, as he must have felt, when on his mill-horse round day after day—were valuable time wasted, of no real service to him as an artist bent on earning a conspicuous position before

the world. All the while he felt there was that within him which sooner or later, in spite of all hindrances or delays, would have free scope. As Fuseli says:—"Heaven and earth, advantages and obstacles, conspire to educate genius"—so was it with David Cox. Whatever of good or ill fortune, hard ungenial work, desires often thwarted, hopes deferred, ambitious thoughts cast down to the earth and temporarily crushed, had been his portion during the past, all had served to strengthen his character, develop and invigorate his artistic powers, and bring out the soul of genius that lay hidden within him. When he took probably the most important step in his life, of casting off old supports, and determining to be a painter, and nothing else; quitting the great city in which he had flourished as a teacher, and coming down into the country to give his whole mind to the work of his heart, he was fully prepared for the struggle; his powers had reached maturity, his resources were copious and varied, his art knowledge was profound, his spirits were high to exultation, and his courage was equal to the effort. He was determined to leave a great name in the annals of British art. "I will succeed!" said he; and all who love art confess with pride and gratitude that he did succeed.

So soon as he had established himself in his new home, and found all things around him comfortable and pleasant, he set to work in good earnest. He busied himself in preparing important drawings for the exhibitions. He looked about in the vicinity of his residence for subjects to paint; he took short journeys

into the neighbouring country for the purpose of sketching; and he soon discovered an abundance of material on which to employ his skill. The lanes and fields around Harborne were at that time very charming to a lover of the picturesque. Fine trees were to be seen on every side, rural cottages here and there dotted the landscape, country people of the true breed stood at the wicket gates, or strolled along the quiet roads, carrying their marketings, or driving home the cows or porkers that had been picking up a meal by the wayside. There were some pretty "bits" for the pencil even within a few yards of Cox's dwelling—views of lane and cottage scenery—fine sycamores and briary hedge-rows, with peeps between of rural homes, ruddy in the sunshine, and sending aloft their wreaths of sweet blue smoke to the summer sky. With infinite relish did the artist set to work at these subjects, often depicted, under various effects; and at those which he found a little farther away, in the meadows and corn-fields at Metchley, or in the Park at Edgbaston. His fine drawing of "The Stubble Field, with Gleaners," made for his friend, Mr. Birch, a large and important work, bearing date 1843, was painted from sketches in the Metchley fields. Then there was the old parish church close at hand, with its tree-shaded graveyard and time-worn stones; and green meadows, with farmsteads adown the slopes and cresting the rising lands farther away; while in the remote distance were the blue hills of Clent, soaring above the pastoral and placid landscape, and lending an additional charm to

the view. These delightful home-subjects gave much employment to Cox's pencil, and he stored his portfolios and sketch-books with a host of valuable notes and memoranda. Within easy reach, also, was the Castle of Dudley, on its proud eminence, of which he made many drawings; and Warwick's stately pile was not far off; and the grand ruin of Kenilworth, dearly loved and often depicted, was near to him; and Maxstoke's mouldering Priory, with the picturesque lanes that lead to it, was almost close at home. To his favourite Rowsley, and "dear old Haddon," was but a short journey; to Sherwood Forest, Bolsover, Hardwick Hall, Lancaster Sands, the lovely scenery of Yorkshire, with far-famed Bolton Abbey as the grand centre of attraction; to all these old haunts and much-loved places and objects, he felt that the road was shortened and that they were easily to be reached at any time. His beloved Wales, too, was much nearer to him than before! All these considerations tended to make his new residence at Harborne a source of infinite satisfaction and delight. His old art-loving friends of Birmingham and the neighbourhood could also readily call to see what he was doing, and give him the benefit of their advice and assistance. One can imagine the pleasure with which, after a long day's painting out of doors, or in his studio, he received the visits of his friends, Roberts and Birch, in an evening, when they dropped in on their way home, to view and admire—perhaps to criticise and suggest improvements in—the results of his labours. Their opinion was always

valued, and their suggestions were frequently carried out. Or possibly they called to propose, or arrange for, a sketching excursion into Wales, or Yorkshire, or some other part of the country; to which he would gladly accede, for the pleasure of their company, and with the prospect of a few weeks of profitable employment before him. Happy Cox! Now he was doing the thing he liked, without distraction and without hindrance! Now was the stream of his art-life free to take its natural course, and flow on evenly, smoothly, with growing strength, and unobstructed current, to the end!

Cox allowed but a short time to elapse after his settlement at Harborne before he started, with two companions, on a sketching trip into Yorkshire, to Bolton Abbey. During the following summer, he visited that locality again, with his friend Mr. Roberts, and executed some beautiful drawings, besides painting from Nature several pictures in oil, which greatly pleased both himself and his companion. On his return, he posted off again, with all speed, into Wales, having this time his son to bear him company. During the autumn, he went over to Kenilworth, and did some excellent work there, in his two or three weeks' stay; and, before winter set in, he finished his outdoor sketching by making a good drawing in the neighbourhood of Bromsgrove.

Cox worked very industriously during the early part of the year 1843, and made great progress in his oil painting. He began to feel his strength in this branch of the art, and was reluctant to lay aside his

palette to take up water-colours when the necessity arose for preparing for the annual exhibition of his Society. Two fine oil pictures which he produced this year—one for Mr. Roberts, entitled the “Outskirts of a Wood, with Gipsies;” the other called “Washing Day,” painted for Mr. Froggat, an old pupil, and a remarkably powerful work, somewhat in the manner of Constable—the writer of this memoir remembers very well, as (with the consent of all parties) he made a copy of the first, for Mr. Thomas Darby, a friend of Cox’s, who was desirous of having a recollection of the picture, which he greatly admired; and as both pictures, some years afterwards, passed through his hands into the possession of Mr. Gillott. Mr. Roberts paid the artist £40 for the “Outskirts of a Wood,” and parted with it for the same sum to an old friend—Mr. Cooper, of Lynn, who was literally hungering for a picture by Cox. Mr. Roberts borrowed it from Mr. Cooper, for the purpose of being copied. The “Washing Day,” painted for Mr. Froggat at the very low price of £15, or thereabouts, afterwards became the property of Mr. R. S. Bond, an artist resident at Bettws-y-coed; and from him it passed, through another channel, to Mr. Carritt, of Birmingham, who also obtained from Mr. Cooper, of Lynn, the “Outskirts of a Wood.” Both pictures were sold, for Mr. Carritt, to Mr. Joseph Gillott, in 1867, for 500 guineas. At the sale of the “Gillott Collection,” in 1872, the “Washing Day” realised 900 guineas, and the “Outskirts of a Wood” the very large sum of 2,205 guineas. Cox repeated the latter subject—composed from sketches

made in Sherwood Forest—several times, both in oil and water-colour. One, the same size as that painted for Mr. Roberts, was purchased by Cox's old friend Mr. David Jones, of Harborne, and after his death realised (with a fine replica of the "Welsh Funeral") the sum of 3,000 guineas!

The admirable drawing (30 by 20) called "A Stubble Field with Gleaners," bought for £25 by Mr. C. Birch, and considered one of the artist's best productions, was also the work of this year, 1843—it was sold by auction recently (1879, a time of great commercial depression), at the death of the owner, for the sum of 700 guineas—and in all probability so was the very grand and important drawing "Bolsover Castle, once the property of Mr. S. Mayou, of Birmingham, afterwards in the collection of Mr. F. Craven, of Manchester. Notwithstanding an attack of illness, which for some time compelled Cox to remain quiet, during the summer of 1843, he produced other fine works besides those above-mentioned, and plied a busy pencil when able to paint. He was not the man to be kept idle by trifling ailments.

At the beginning of the following year, 1844, he completed the fine upright picture in oil, "Caer Cennen Castle," purchased by a lady (though not directly from the artist) Miss Phipson of Edgbaston, Birmingham. Some years afterwards, when there was a great demand for the works of Cox, she was induced to part with it for the large sum of £2,000. During the summer of this year, Cox, having with him as companion an artist friend, Mr. Harry Johnson of London, formerly a pupil

of Müller, went on a sketching tour into North Wales, and made studies of the fine scenery in the vale of Clwyd, from Sir John Williams's park at Bodelwyddan, near Rhyl. From these sketches he afterwards painted two grand pictures in oil, with which most art lovers are familiar; and also made drawings of great beauty and importance. When this district had been sketched over, the pair worked their way, from one place to another, towards Bettws-y-coed, staying for a few days, on their road, at the little inn at Llanbedr, about half-way between Conway and Bettws. Hence they proceeded to Bettws-y-coed, taking up their quarters at the old "Royal Oak," and remained there for several weeks.

Not long after Cox returned from his Welsh excursion, he journeyed again, with Mr. Roberts and other friends, into Yorkshire, to make drawings from the favourite subjects, Bolton Abbey, Knaresborough Castle, and other striking features of the locality. He likewise tried his hand in painting from Nature in oil during this excursion, but with no great success, as he thought; his friend Roberts's facility in that medium probably causing him dissatisfaction at the slow progress he made with his own performances. So soon as he returned home from this trip, he set vigorously to work at his oil pictures, being determined to overcome the difficulties he encountered in painting out of doors. He also meditated painting two pictures in oil for the London exhibitions of the following year, and in all probability made studies for them from the sketches brought back from Yorkshire.

During the spring of 1845 Cox was fully occupied in preparing his drawings for the Water-Colour Exhibition, and had ten or twelve in hand—four of them large important works—“Knaresborough Castle,” “Brough,” “The Terrace, Haddon,” and “Kenilworth Castle.” These, with a number of smaller drawings, appeared in the London gallery the same season. When this work was off his mind, and the exhibition open, he paid another visit, in company with his friend Mr. W. Ellis, to Rowsley, making a stay there of about a fortnight, for the purpose of sketching “Old Haddon,” a series of views of which, with the adjacent scenery, Mr. Ellis was anxious to possess.

Cox visited Bettws-y-coed again this year, and did much good work during his stay of several weeks. He had been greatly struck with the scenery of that charming locality on his previous sojourn there, with Mr. H. Johnson, and his admiration was still further heightened by all he saw on the second visit. He discovered so many fine subjects for the pencil whichever way he took, that there appeared to be an inexhaustible store of them, and he resolved to devote at least a month every year to sketching at Bettws. This resolution he carried out, and continued his annual visits to the place as long as he lived. In the following year, 1846, the writer had the pleasure of meeting him there for the first time—a never-to-be forgotten time! On subsequent occasions he either accompanied Cox to Bettws, or joined him at the old “Royal Oak.” They went out sketching together; they were in each other’s com-

pany most of the time. They ate, drank, slept under the same roof. It will no doubt interest the reader to have some account of Bettws-y-coed at that time, and of the doings of David Cox there and then, whilst in pursuit of his art. This the writer will endeavour to accomplish further on.

At the close of the year 1845, poor Cox had the greatest misfortune that can befall a loving husband. His wife, his faithful companion for so many years—who had nobly sustained him during his seasons of depression, early and late; who had rejoiced at his successes, and been elated at his triumphs; who witnessed his small beginnings, his many struggles for existence or for fame; who spoke kind words of encouragement when his heart was sinking within him; and who, when his genius was acknowledged by the world at last, was more proud and happy than himself—his loving wife was stricken with a fatal illness, and taken from him. Mrs. Cox was never strong, she was frequently ailing; nevertheless she lived to be seventy-four—a fair average span of existence. Although her health had for some time been declining, and she felt getting weaker day by day, so that the end might have been seen surely and swiftly approaching, yet when the parting hour arrived poor Cox was completely stunned by the blow, and it was long before he recovered sufficiently to resume his customary pursuits. After the death of his wife the old servant, Ann Fowler, was installed as his housekeeper, with a servant under her—Mercy Tomlinson—both much esteemed by Cox's

intimate friends, and both remaining with him until his death.

In the course of a few weeks after the death of Mrs. Cox, when time had begun to assuage the anguish of separation, Cox, thinking that occupation would be the best restorative, went up again into his painting-room, and busied himself in looking out his work for the ensuing exhibition of water-colours, and also in commencing his first large oil picture of the Vale of Clwyd. This picture he purposed sending to the Royal Academy; but as he could not complete it in time, its destination was the exhibition at Liverpool, from which, although extremely moderate in price, it was returned unsold. The artist afterwards parted with it to his frame-maker for a sketch by Müller, and the frame-maker sold it to a Mr. Spencer, solicitor, of Birmingham, from whom it passed eventually into the fine collection of Mr. William Sharp of Handsworth. This gentleman retained it until induced, after Cox's death, to accept the sum of £2,000 for the work. Besides the "Vale of Clwyd," the smaller picture, "Lancaster Castle,"—presented to a friend, and which, at the Gillott sale, brought so large a price (as before mentioned)—was painted during this year. In addition, Cox also made a number of water-colour drawings—some large and important—for the exhibition in Pall Mall. He paid his customary annual visit to London when these drawings were finished, to see how they looked on the walls of the Society's gallery, and to affix prices to them according as they looked; and then arranged with a party of friends for another

visit to Bolton Abbey, where he remained some time making sketches. No sooner back home again than the charms of "dear Bettws-y-coed" began to draw him like a magnet, and in July he started off once more to that favourite spot, for a month's sojourn. He had become completely fascinated with the locality; he had found there so much to be done that exactly suited him, and was made so comfortable at his quarters at the "Royal Oak," that Bettws became his favourite sketching haunt for ever after. During the month of August in this year the author had the pleasure of joining him at Bettws-y-coed, and purposes giving some idea of the place at that time, and of the manner in which David Cox passed his pleasant four or five weeks there on repeated occasions.

CHAPTER VI.

1846, *et seq.*

The Flood at Corwen—Bettws-y-coed—The “Royal Oak.”

It may not be out of place at the commencement of this chapter to give a brief account of what the author was fortunate enough to witness on his way to Bettws-y-coed for the first time, during the summer of 1846, particularly as it led to the production of one of Cox's finest drawings, entitled, “The Flood.” In company with an artist-friend—Mr. Edward Coleman of Birmingham—the writer took the train for Chester, on the road to his destination at Bettws (there was no railway to that place in those days), about the second week in August, and thence proceeded by coach to Llangollen, where they slept. On the following morning, after looking about the neighbourhood for an hour, he and his companion made ready to continue their journey by the coach, which left Llangollen for Bangor, passing through the place to which they were bound; but, finding there was room outside for only one passenger, they hired an open car to take them on their road to Bettws. A short time previous to leaving Birmingham, very heavy and continuous rains had fallen in that part of North Wales, particularly in the district around Corwen, and it was uncertain how far along the road

from Llangollen to Corwen they would be able to proceed; but as the coach had gone that way, they thought there could be no material difficulty in following the same route. On their approach to Corwen, however, they were astonished at the scene which presented itself. A water-spout had burst on the hills at the back of the little town, and had wrought destruction all around. Although several days had passed since this occurred, torrents of water were still pouring down the mountain-side, carrying with them vast quantities of earth and stones—some of great size—into the streets of Corwen, on to the main road, and into the adjacent fields by the Dee-side. It was a spectacle never to be forgotten. Nearly burying the walls bordering the main thoroughfare, soil, gravel, and great rubble-stones lay in heaps; carts and other vehicles which had been left standing there before the catastrophe were almost concealed from sight under the *débris*; houses and shops were filled with water and sand; while many of the residents were wandering about in a state of bewilderment, not knowing how to repair the mischief which had been brought about. A Wesleyan chapel, standing rather below the road, had been almost wrecked (a staff of women-scavengers were then busily at work, clearing out the water and rubbish with which it was filled); but the old church of Corwen, standing on rising ground, had altogether escaped injury, though torrents were still rushing down beside and around it, hissing and roaring as they fell. When the author and his friend—having obtained a fresh horse and convey-

ance at the "Glendwr's Arms"—passed out of Corwen, on their way, a small auction was going on, of damaged drapery goods, from the door-step of a shop, a crowd of about a dozen persons standing at front, and a salesman, with a keen eye to business, taking the "bids." When the travellers arrived at their journey's end, they described to Mr. Cox the scene and the incidents they had observed, and suggested to him the desirability of his returning home by way of Corwen, and making a sketch of the place and event, which he did; and the powerful drawing of "The Flood" was the result.

Great was the disappointment of the travellers when they reached Bettws to find that the "Royal Oak" was full, and that they could not sleep there. Cox, who came out to welcome them, was also much vexed, but recommended them to go on to the "Eagle," at Llanrwst for a short time, until there was room at the "Oak." On the following morning, before they had come down-stairs, the servant knocked at their bed-room door, to say that a gentleman was waiting in the coffee-room to see them. Whoever could he be? They knew no one at Llanrwst. Much to their astonishment, they discovered the unexpected visitor was no other than their friend Cox, who had walked over the fields, a distance of three miles, to breakfast with them, and to convey the pleasing intelligence that there would be room for them at the "Royal Oak" that night, as some visitors were going to leave during the day. This was very gratifying news indeed; and soon after breakfast a car was ordered, and the delighted party, with bag and

baggage, in a very short time landed at Bettws-y-coed, to stay there in each other's company until the expiration of their visit.

And this was Bettws-y-coed, about which we had heard so much! "And you'll *like* it," said Cox, as we descended from the car to enter the humble little hostelry, "I hope, as well as I do." Sure enough, we *did* like it; and, after the example of Cox, repeated our visits again and again. The author will never forget his impressions on entering the place by broad daylight. The morning was one as lovely as ever broke upon earth. The sun was well up, and shone brightly from over the hill-tops upon the little cluster of cottages nestling cosily among the foliage at the foot of overhanging crags, and which sent aloft, in sweet blue wreaths, the fragrant peat smoke from about a dozen fires. The hills behind the village were clothed with verdure almost to their crests; here and there a mass of dark-grey rock towering above the green of climbing trees, caught on its edges the sun's rays, and was brought out to the eye in bold relief. The neighbouring and encircling eminences—some bare and craggy, others covered with thick woods to their tops—were partially enveloped in the haze of a summer day, which gave them an inexpressible softness, whilst silvery streams came tumbling down their sides from bog and tarn far away upon the moors, flashing through the green of the bordering trees, or falling from rock to rock in lines of unbroken whiteness down to the valley below. The river Llugwy, well filled by recent rains, was dashing along its course on the opposite side of the

road, underneath the wall, brown as umber, from the bogs and peat-stained waters of the upper country, bearing along great flakes of foam, whirling through rocks and stones, boiling and foaming on its way. Birds were chirruping in the bright sunshine, cattle were lowing in the fields, Chanticleer and his dames were strutting about the road, near the inn door, the village folk moving leisurely along; while, to crown all, friends from home, who were travelling through Wales, had pulled up at the "Royal Oak," and were waiting to shake hands—a most gratifying surprise!—ere they proceeded on their journey. The party were Mr. Gillott and his daughters, who had heard that David Cox was staying at Bettws.

Every one now-a-days has seen Bettws-y-coed. It is known well through the length and breadth of the land. It would therefore be foolishness to give its latitude and longitude, or to say that it is situated on the great Holyhead Road, running from Shrewsbury, through Bangor, to Holyhead. Once on a time, when David Cox first made its acquaintance, it was by no means so well known and so frequently visited as at present, being then but an unpretending, insignificant Welsh village, of no account at all. The exquisite features of the surrounding scenery would seem not to have attracted the notice of any artist capable of transcribing them in such a manner as to call forth the admiration of the connoisseurs, or create in the nature-loving breast of some favoured tourist a desire to sojourn in the place, with a view to behold for himself

the many picturesque beauties to be found on every side. Edmund Burke is said to have spoken of the Vale of Conway, or rather of Llanrwst, in high terms, as containing some of the loveliest views he had ever beheld, surpassing even those in the far-famed Vale of Llangollen; but beyond this no eulogium had been pronounced on the scenery around Bettws-y-coed. Until David Cox honoured it with his visits, and brought his genius to bear upon its numberless charms, it was comparatively unknown. In consequence chiefly of his labours in this rich field, shoals of visitors now flock to the place. Bettws, in the season, is overrun with tourists; and artists, male and female, are to be seen on every hillside and under every green tree. This is Cox's doing. Like Cæsar of old, "he came, he saw, he conquered;" and the name of David Cox will ever be associated with Bettws-y-coed, as long as landscape art endures.

For a long succession of summers the famous artist might have been seen—with ruddy complexion, a figure by no means slight, and "clad in a suit of sober grey" lounging before the "Royal Oak," smoking a cigar, or issuing from its then humble portal, sketch-book in hand, after an early breakfast, to jot down with rapid strokes the leading features of some lovely "bit" near at hand, or to trace the lines of some more extensive subject, more distant, in the Lledr valley, or by the side of the beautiful Conway river. He could find nothing in the whole Principality that retained such a hold on his affections—not even the fine scenery around

Festiniog, Dolgelly, Llangollen, Barmouth, or elsewhere—as the charming views and subjects with which his favourite Bettws locality abounded. During his last days, when incapable of travelling, he delighted to recall to memory the features of the spot, and frequently exclaimed how happy he should be if he could behold “ dear old Bettws ” once again !

It has been well said :—“ The country all around may be said to be Cox’s land. Every wide expanse, or lofty mountain, every nook and corner, every object that meets the eye, every incident, and every effect that can occur in such a district, has furnished a subject for his prolific pencil. The wild uplands and craggy steeps, flooded in sunshine or veiled in mists ; the brawling stream and flashing torrent, where the water comes dancing from the hills, leaping from rock to rock with a great rush and a great cry, as only mountain-torrents can, seaming their sides with threads of silvery hue and brightness—peat-gatherers and fern-gatherers, splashing through boggy fens, or wending their weary way to strange out-of-the-way places on the hill-side or mountain-top, where not unfrequently the poor but hospitable owner will startle the visitor by producing a sketch or other memorial of some artist, perhaps now of established and wide-spread reputation, or long since removed from the scene of his triumphs and his mortifications, who years gone by had found shelter beneath the lowly, storm-buffed roof. Shepherds tending their flocks, that browse peacefully among the grey stones up the mountain tops ; or collecting them

hurriedly together at the approach of night or tempest ; or counting them, one by one, as they rush through an open gate into some little enclosure. Drovers, with their great herds of cattle streaming in interminable succession along the roads on their way to the markets of England ; ruddy girls, in short jackets, and probably without shoes or stockings, their long locks flying in the wind, standing on some point of vantage near the house door, and summoning the distant farm-labourers to their meal with a blast on the bullock's horn ; fishermen throwing their enticing fly from the rocky river-banks, or groping for salmon, elbow deep in the traps which are set here and there along the stream. These incidents, and many more, characteristic of the country, have been noticed by the observant artist, and recorded in his immortal works."

Great are the changes which Bettws-y-coed has undergone since David Cox first visited the place. At that time it could boast of only one little inn, a wretched house, with miserable accommodation. No artist who had been tempted to stay at Bettws for a few days' sketching, would care to venture a second time under the roof of such an uncomfortable hostelry. It was called the "Hand," and was situated just over the bridge of "Pont-y-pair," on the road to Llanrwst. In course of time, partly in consequence of many interesting drawings made and exhibited by Cox from the Bettws scenery, which drew attention to the place, an increased demand for accommodation sprang up, and other small inns arose in the village, the "Royal

Oak," kept by Edward Roberts, being perhaps the most comfortable of the whole. There was among them the "Swan," situated near the toll-gate, at which Cox once or twice stayed; but the "Oak" eventually became his favourite quarters. When the author first saw it, in 1846, he must confess that he was surprised at its unpretending appearance. It stood close beside the road: was a long, low building only chamber high, and coloured of a mild salmon-tint. Like other humble houses in the Principality, the door opened with a thumb-latch, when it was closed, which was not very often, admitting visitors to the kitchen, the better class passing through it, and likewise through the group of farm-labourers and other rustic guests, smoking pipes and drinking their ale by the fire-side, along a short, dark passage into the parlour, reserved for company of "the higher order." On entering the front door the eye caught a glimpse of the bedroom staircase, very steep and very narrow, the sides of which from bottom to top were decorated with saddles and harness, requiring occasionally dexterous steering by visitors on the way to bed, to avoid a blow in the face from some unduly projecting piece of horse-furniture. Bacon and hams hung from the kitchen ceiling, ripened and mellowed, no doubt, by the clouds of smoke from the peat fires. The little parlour was snug and comfortable enough. It boasted of a proper dining-table, a couch more or less easy—rather less than more—and a sufficient number of chairs for all the guests it could contain. The walls were decorated with a few prints, and

not unfrequently with a sketch or two pinned to the paper by some artist staying in the house. The visitor at that time will recollect the bold fresco of "Catherine Douglas Barring the Castle Door with her Arm," after Redgrave, which Cox executed in water-colour on the unsightly bare plaster of a bricked-up doorway in the room, which had not been papered over. The bedrooms—well, there was one fairly comfortable sleeping apartment, containing two beds, which was invariably given to Cox when stopping at the "Oak," and he occupied both beds, one to sleep in, the other to lay his drawings upon. Not much can be said for the other chambers. On the author's first visit, he had to put up with a small room over the stable, the house being full, and he passed to it by the family apartment of the landlord and his son and daughter, just screened from observation by a drawn curtain; then through another room, occasionally occupied by drovers on the road to some market; and so on, into the chamber set apart for his use over the stable. It may be imagined that his slumbers on the first night or two were not of the soundest. What with the black-looking drovers blundering into the room at dead of night, and the restlessness of the quadrupeds below, "tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," was intermittent in her visits. In short, the "Royal Oak" was a very unpretending little inn indeed; but the accommodation, to those accustomed to rough it on their rambles, was such as might readily be endured. The host and his daughter, Miss Mary Roberts, were civil and obliging;

and the provision they made for the "entertainment" of their customers, as regards table comforts, was worthy of all commendation. Board and lodging, at the time mentioned above, to members of the artist profession who were likely to stay some time in the house, were charged a guinea per week; but these low terms were afterwards raised to twenty-five shillings, when accommodation at Bettws became more sought after, and provisions rose in price. David Cox was very happy at this humble little inn, and so were the friends who joined him there, as well as those passing travellers who were induced by the beauty of the surrounding scenery to stay a short time at the "Oak." During the sketching season, Bettws, as it became better known, was often filled to overflowing with amateurs and artists. Their white tents and umbrellas, to be seen in whichever direction the eye turned, suggested to the visitor the encampment of an invading army. In every road or lane, on every eminence or river-bank, the artist was encountered, bearing his paraphernalia to or from the sketching-ground, or beheld busily at work transferring to canvas the beautiful objects before him; whilst in the evenings, after the labours of the day, he was seen chatting with his fellows at the inn door, smoking pipe or cigar, and enjoying the delicious calm of the closing day. Not unfrequently two or three resident artists would drop in at the "Oak," after tea, to pay their respects to "Mr. Cox," to talk over the doings of the day, and discuss a glass of whisky-toddy with their pipes.

Many a delightful evening has been thus spent, and many valuable hints for future practice have been carried away from the small sitting-room in the old house, when the "Master" was honouring Bettws with his customary visit.

The popular landscape painter and Royal Academician, Mr. Thomas Creswick, sometimes stayed for a short time at the "Oak," just to paint one or two pictures, and away back to London. He made himself very agreeable to his less eminent brother artists in the house, who looked up to him as standing on the topmost round of the ladder of fame, and consequently as an object of respect and admiration. David Cox, not being an Academician, nor likely to become one, did not perhaps inspire those feelings of reverential awe in the youthful mind as did his more fortunate and titled competitor; but he undoubtedly was regarded with greater affection, and by some who could see further into the secret places of art and nature, was held to be the possessor of "gifts" which in the end would secure for him such a reputation as his lucky rival would never obtain. And who will say that time has not justified their convictions? Other artists, now eminent in their profession, or since then gone to the grave, occasionally made the "Royal Oak" their temporary abode during the sketching season, and assembled round the dinner table with Cox and his friends when the work of the day had been ended, beguiling the evening hours with pleasant friendly talk.

CHAPTER VII.

Bettws-y-coed (*continued*)—Cox at the “Royal Oak.”

“DEAR old Bettws!” This was the loving phrase often applied by David Cox to his favourite sketching haunt, after he had made himself fully acquainted with the charms of its scenery, and had found such comfortable quarters at the “Royal Oak.” He was quite at home there. Everybody was kind to him; everybody was studious to please and make him happy. From the landlord, Miss Mary Roberts, and the son, who often drove him to his painting ground, down to the lad who carried his traps, and the old woman who knitted his winter stockings, all were delighted to see him come to Bettws again on his annual visit, and all did their best to make that visit for him a happy memory. And Cox *was* happy there. He did good work there. He was at the height of his power when there. His art-knowledge had culminated, and his ability to apply it to the subjects he there found to delineate had by long practice become all that could be desired. There he felt himself a strong man, the conscious possessor of genius at its maturity. No wonder he was happy at “dear Bettws!” No wonder that he was enraptured with its scenic beauties! No wonder that he had an affectionate regard even for its very name!

The author is tempted to insert here some lines written during one of his own visits to Bettws-y-coed. He thinks that something like the same thoughts and emotions passed through the mind of David Cox, as he gazed upon the varied loveliness of hill and dale, wood and water, rock and mountain.

BETTWS-Y-COED.

Man loves the place he has been happy in,
 And thinks it is the sweetest spot of earth.
 The *heart* doth make it what it seems to be,
 Coining the beautiful where little is,
 And where 'tis rife enhancing every charm.
 No matter if it be some poor dull spot,
 Where Nature has been niggard and unkind,
 Owning no grace to fix the roving eye—
 Barren and bleak—tame, featureless, and drear;
 Or like thee, Bettws! fairest of the fair!
 Where all we see is beautiful and grand!
 Around whose humble cots (that nestle sweet
 In woody shelter under beetling rocks),
 On every side, whichever way we stroll,
 The loveliest scenes and objects meet the gaze,
 Stamping their impress on the mind for aye.
 Majestic are thy hills, along whose sides
 Oft trail the stooping clouds! The mountain-peaks
 That rim thy grand horizon, are sublime,
 High-tow'ring above all, enwreath'd with mist,
 Or clear, with sunshine, in the blue serene!
 The streams that wind amid thy peaceful vales,
 And joining soon in happy marriage-bonds
 Glide on in silvery beauty to the sea:
 Oh! who can praise enough their many charms,
 As on along their sinuous course they sweep
 Past rocky heights and tempest-toppled crags,
 With breaks and falls and thund'rous cataracts
 That steam with spray, and shake the earth afar!
 Or 'neath the pleasant shelter of green boughs,
 'Mid softer, gentler scenes—by farm and field—

The cottage-paddock and the soothing lawn—
 Oft spreading into glassy pools, so still
 That not a ripple frets, and in whose depths
 Th' embow'ring trees are imaged fair and bright—
 The grand o'ertopping mountains—and the sky—
 The summer sky—arrayed in blue and gold.
 Along their banks the angler oft is seen,
 Throwing his tempting fly from morn till night,
 With hope that burns a never-dying flame,
 And patience that might fit a man for heav'n.
 There, too, the artist, perched on vantage-point,
 Is oft descried, absorbed in his high task
 Of limning Nature's varied loveliness,
 And toiling sore for immortality.

The grace of clustering, pleasant foliage,
 Thou lack'st not, Bettws ! for thou'rt rich in trees ;
 Amid the many mountain-wastes of Wales
 'Tis thy peculiar charm. Trees climb thy hills
 Up to their tops; and o'er their stony sides
 Spread a green garb to hide their nakedness.
 Thy vales and verdant meads are full of trees,
 That lend a covert from the summer sun,
 Which flashes through the gaps of tangled boughs
 Only to chequer and make fair our path.

Words cannot paint thy loveliness, nor tell
 Of half thy charms ! By those who know the well
 This will at once be yielded ; but the rest
 Will deem thee all unworthy of such praise.
 Sweetest of spots of which dear Wales can boast !
 What heart could wish a fairer paradise
 Wherein to pass the evening hours of life ?

David Cox's much-loved humble home at this charming place has disappeared from the scene altogether, and, as everybody knows, a large commodious hotel has taken possession of the site once occupied by its lowly predecessor. In lieu of a few plodding pedestrians, knapsack on back and staff in hand ; with a speculative fisherman or two, armed with rod and basket ; or a weary artist, hungry and travel-stained,

picture beneath his arm, and easel across his shoulder, lounging before the door for a few minutes' chat ere sitting down to dinner in the little old-fashioned parlour of the old "Royal Oak;"—now crowds of tourists may be seen any fine day in the season, promenading in front of the windows of the grand new hotel; playing croquet in the garden, or sitting down in the evening to a luxurious repast at its *table d'hôte*. Bettws-y-coed has within a few years become a busy bustling little place. A railway running straight into it, brings daily, through the summer, scores—nay, hundreds—of visitors from Llanrwst, Conway, Llandudno, Rhyl, and other neighbouring towns; and another, more recently made, running through the entire length of the lovely valley of the Lledr, from Bettws to Festiniog, is intended to convey lead and slates from the latter place to the main line at Conway, and old women with eggs and butter to the market at Llanrwst. Horror of horrors! a stone bridge with several arches carries this railway across the famous Heron Pool, which many will remember at a bend of the river just beyond the little "Fish Inn" (now turned into an office), once a convenient halting-place for artists desirous of painting the scenery of the valley. The Heron Pool has often afforded a subject for their pencil, and many a passing tourist has stopped awhile to admire it. In this valley Cox made many sketches, and found subjects for some of his finest drawings. That grand work, entitled the "Eagle's Crag," was executed from a part of the valley between the "Fish Inn" and the romantic bridge of

Pont-y-pant, at the furthest end. Immense fragments of rock, fallen from the cliffs above, cover the hill-side with masses of every size and shape, lying about in wild confusion, and imparting to the scene an appearance of savage grandeur. The road to Dolwyddelan passes through the midst of this sublime part of the Lledr valley, and a feeling of awe comes over the traveller as he wends his way underneath and among these huge blocks of stone which time and the elements have flung around him. Through the length of this lovely valley it is that this new railway takes its course, with what effect on the scenery may be readily imagined; and "dear old Bettws" has lost the quiet, out-of-the-world, friendly look which some fondly remember thirty years ago. There is a well-appointed station close at hand, with omnibuses, cabs, and other vehicles continually plying to and from the trains. Lodging-houses have sprung up on every side; and shops for the sale of various merchandise display their wares along the great road that runs through the once sequestered village. When the author first visited Bettws, in 1846, it could boast of only one small shop—a mere cottage, with a little window, in which a few useful articles were exposed for sale—tea, sugar, candles, soap, and other things the villagers might require. A small stock of turpentine was generally kept there, in case any artist staying in the place should run short of that indispensable article. Much Welsh, and a little English, was spoken at "the shop." Since that time the petty village has made a great stride in advance.

The old church has been found too small to accommodate the visitors who crowd into Bettws during "the season," and a new one has been erected, devoted to the English-speaking community entirely. More surprising still! at the back of the old church, and near the side of the "sweet-flowing" river Conway, the visitor may behold in all its ugliness an unsightly gasometer, placed there for the very desirable purpose of lighting "dear old Bettws" with gas! The railway station, with its shrieking engines and multitudinous noises, almost abuts upon the wall of the old churchyard, with its venerable yews, once sacred to quiet, and sweet with the repose of its secluded position amid the mountains that screened it from the world; and a wide thoroughfare now conducts the traveller to the railway-platform, near the very spot, and almost over the very ground, where of old might have been seen, on a Sabbath morning, groups of pious villagers wending their way, in twos and threes, to that sacred fabric where for generations their forefathers had assembled to offer up their prayers. Cox's beautiful and impressive picture, "A Welsh Funeral," was painted from an incident he witnessed on the spot here described. A young woman of the village had died of consumption, and was being carried to her resting-place in the old churchyard, down the ancient road—grass-grown, stony, and bordered with rank weeds—followed by a crowd of men, women, and children in motley garb, some with a bit of mourning thrown over their dress out of respect to the deceased, and all solemnly and silently following the coffin to the

grave. The road—a narrow lane—was then skirted and overhung with venerable sycamores, which flung broad shadows across the path, and formed a somewhat gloomy approach to the sacred edifice ; but the evening sun on that occasion shone upon the tree-tops, glinted on the old belfry, and threw its glowing rays over the sweet background of purple mountains seen beyond the church, whilst here and there a glittering beam fell through the branches of the trees on one or two of the throng slowly wending their way down the lane. David Cox seized on this touching incident, and fixed it upon canvas for the delight of all sympathetic hearts. The picture (he repeated the subject, with variations, several times, both in oil and water-colours) is certainly one of his most impressive works, and is handled with a skill peculiarly happy. The large water-colour drawing of this subject, exhibited at the Pall Mall Gallery in 1850—a truly magnificent production—strange to say, did not find a ready purchaser there, although its price was extremely low. Mr. Topham, the eminent artist, induced a prizewinner in the London Art Union to make choice of it for his prize of £50 ; but this individual soon became tired of it (not being pretty enough, probably, for his taste), and, Mr. Topham, disgusted, doubtless, took it off his hands, giving him the money, which most likely pleased him a great deal better. This fine drawing is now in the collection of Mr. F. Craven, of Manchester.

Cox, as it has been before said, felt himself quite at home at the "Royal Oak," where everything possible was

done to insure his comfort and convenience. He was a sort of little king at Bettws, was waited on, respected, and beloved by all who came into contact with him. Lord Willoughby might be owner of the soil, but David Cox was lord of the people's affections. Many a kind thing has been done for him by the poor residents about the place, and many a kindness has he rendered to them in return. His arrival was not unfrequently marked by a small present of tobacco for some smoker, or a pocket-knife for the boy who usually carried his painting "traps;" and an old woman, whom he had known some time, was speedily set to work to knit woollen stockings for his own wear, and for some of his Birmingham friends. There was generally a great contention among the village lads as to which should be his "tiger," to carry the sketching apparatus for the season; and "Mr. Cox's boy" always looked upon himself as in the proudest position of them all. Not even the lad who carried the easel and colour-box for Mr. Thomas Creswick, the great R.A., felt so elated and raised above his fellows, as did "little John," who, with canvas on back and sketching-stool in hand, trotted in the rear of David Cox, the veteran artist and kind-hearted man, who gave himself no airs of greatness, but went about humbly and unpretendingly, and had a good-natured word for every one he met. To young artists of his acquaintance who were trying their "'prentice hands" upon the scenery of Bettws, he often gave most valuable hints, and sometimes took their palette and pencils in hand, to show them how to master the diffi-

culties that beat them down. "Well, how are you getting on?" he has said to one of these aspirants for fame whom he has encountered on the way. "Oh, Mr. Cox, I am making a terrible daub of my picture. I find nature a great deal too hard for *me* to imitate." "And so it has been many a time for *me*; and I have often rubbed out my morning's work, disgusted with what I had done. Lend me your palette and brushes, and I will do a bit for you." And he has sat down to battle with the difficult part, and by a few effective touches has soon put matters right, to the surprise and gratification of the discomfited tyro.* He has said to a friend, "Mr. — has kindly given me a tube of

* There was at that time a resident at the "Royal Oak," of the name of Hoyle, a remarkably stout man, known to all the visitors as "Fat Hoyle." This gentleman, who possessed some small artistic abilities occasionally essayed his skill in painting from nature, but very frequently broke down under difficulties which he found insurmountable. He was prone to call in the aid of his friend Cox, who might happen to be near him when at work, to show him how to overcome the difficulty. "Mr. Cox, will you kindly put a few touches on my sky? I cannot make the clouds float as they should do." In fact, the clouds were as hard as iron, and as heavy. Cox would smile at the request, take up Hoyle's palette and brushes, and in a short time paint over, not the sky only, but nearly the whole of Hoyle's sketch, burying completely that amateur's own work. Many a picture of Hoyle's did David Cox "touch up" in this manner, and turn an abortive effort into a saleable production. To those who were not in the secret, Hoyle used sometimes to exhibit these sketches as productions of his own, and surprise his visitors with his cleverness. He was a jolly sort of fellow in his way, and many of the sojourners at the "Oak" liked him. He always took the head of the table at dinner, and carved for the party. Artists who visited Bettws for the first time, found him of service to them in many respects. He was well acquainted with all the picturesque and *paintable* subjects of the district. He would direct them where to find the grand views and choice "bits" which Cox, or Creswick, or some other eminent artist, had drawn and painted. "Mr. Cox, sir, made a grand thing from the subject I tell you of;" or, "Mr. Creswick,

white" (or some other colour of which he was deficient). "I will make him a little drawing before I go home," and a very charming sketch has been the welcome compensation. His advice to young artists whom he saw working with great timidity and slowness, was, "Don't spare the paint! Use plenty of colour, and *dab at it!*" Very excellent advice too; as it not unfrequently happens that the result of much painstaking, with only a half-filled brush, is an extremely tame, insipid picture. Cox knew that the spirit of a scene was more likely to be caught by painting rapidly with a pencil well charged with pigment, than by devoting days or weeks to the subject, elaborating each part with painful slowness and a pencil only just tipped with colour.

the Royal Academician, painted a fine large picture, which he sold for a considerable sum, on the spot I pointed out to him in the Lledr valley. You will find it just beyond the bridge. I sat beside him the greater part of a day, whilst he was at work. He was a very rapid painter, sir, and nearly finished the picture at a sitting." Hoyle could relate many anecdotes of the artist brotherhood who visited Bettws during his residence there, and over his evening glass would often be very good company. He was fond of fishing, as well as of painting, and was useful to the disciples of Izaak Walton, who paid their half-crown a day to "try" for trout or salmon in the rivers of Bettws. He knew many of the likely places for fish, and made friends by giving information. Latterly, when he became extremely stout, he found the exercise of fishing too fatiguing, and contented himself with looking on while others followed the sport. His rod was suspended over the door of the little parlour of the "Oak," when he lodged there, and he had many an exploit to boast of in connection with that interesting instrument. David Cox made a clever sketch of him, walking along with his rod over his broad shoulder, and carrying a large salmon by the gills. It was a back view, in his tartan coat and breeks, and with the "wide-awake" hat and feather knowingly cocked on the side of his head. Poor "Fat Hoyle" has been many years buried in Bettws Churchyard.

It is well known, to thousands now, that David Cox painted the sign once suspended above the door of the "Royal Oak." Since the artist's death, this has been framed and glazed at the expense of some old sojourners at the inn, and removed into the house—hanging, when the writer last saw it, in the entrance-hall of the present great hotel. It is rather coarsely executed, Cox's practice as a scene-painter at the theatres in early days having taught him the kind of manipulation required to make the subject effectively seen at a distance ; nevertheless, it exhibits ideas and touches very characteristic of the artist. King Charles is partially beheld, seated in the middle of the great oak—a fine old forest tree—but, in violation of all established rule in treating the subject, he does not wear his golden crown, being much more appropriately dressed for the occasion ! The original sign had for a long time battled with sun and rain, so that its pristine brightness had considerably faded. In fact, it had become a very enigmatical affair, and certainly required a few words underneath to inform the passing traveller that it was the veritable "Royal Oak" he was indeed gazing at. Cox had promised the landlord that some fine day, when he should have nothing better to do, he would "touch it up," and restore its faded charms. Accordingly, one day he procured a ladder, and with palette on thumb, and a handful of brushes, he set vigorously to work. He had not been long thus occupied, dabbing away with plenty of pigment, the forest monarch putting forth new foliage of most verdant hue, and the herbage at

foot springing into life and beauty at every touch, when it suddenly occurred to him that his position at that moment was not a very dignified one for an artist of reputation, and that should any one pass who knew him, a story might be circulated not greatly to his advantage. But he comforted himself with the reflection that possibly he might get through his task unobserved, or that, if noticed at all by any passing traveller, he would be taken to be the legitimate sign-painter of the district, who had been engaged to do the job. Before long he heard the sound of a carriage approaching. "Now," thought he, "I'm caught!" Still he kept his place on the ladder, and painted away, never looking round to ascertain who or what was coming. Greatly to his dismay, the vehicle stopped at the very foot of the ladder, the carriage door was opened, the steps were let down, and presently he perceived a sweet female face peeping at him from below. "Why, it is Mr. Cox, I declare!" greeted his ear, and made him almost drop to the ground. "You are not painting for fame, sir, *now*!" Looking down, he discovered that the lady was an old London pupil, who had recently been married, and was then travelling through Wales with her husband.

In the previous chapter it has been said that Cox embellished the parlour of the "Royal Oak" with a large picture in water-colour on the bare plaster of a bricked-up doorway—"Catherine Douglas Barring the Castle Door with her Arm"—after Redgrave. This was done on a wet day, when he could not get out of the

house. It was effectively painted, and surprised many a stranger on first entering the room. Great care was taken to preserve it uninjured. Cox also purchased the first portion of a visitors' book for the house, and made a clever vignette drawing of a "Forest Oak" as a frontispiece, inscribing his name on the first page. This book soon became filled with names of visitors, sketches by amateurs and artists, verses, and occasional remarks; so that it had to be enlarged by repeated additions, and became a bulky work of several volumes. Some of the drawings it contained were made by artists of eminence, who were staying at the "Oak," but whether they are to be found at the present time where they were originally placed is by no means certain. Visitors' books, particularly at houses of entertainment like the "Royal Oak," have too frequently been pilaged by unscrupulous persons of whatever meritorious works of art they possessed; these genteel robbers doubtless being of opinion that they had as good a right to what they could lay hands on, and secretly convey away, as the owners of the books. It is to be feared that the visitors' book at the "Oak" has not altogether escaped the spoiler.

CHAPTER VIII.

Cox at Bettws (*continued*)—Sketching Trips in the Vicinity—Bad Weather.

VERY delightful were the little sketching excursions which the writer, in company with David Cox and other artist-friends, frequently made in the district around Bettws-y-coed. A vehicle was chartered to convey the party to the spot chosen for the day's work—painters, "tigers," materials, and all! And off they started, soon after breakfast, full of spirits, and with the hope of a fine day before them. Joke, anecdote, and innocent merriment enlivened the way. "I trust it will keep fine," said one. "I am afraid it will rain," said another, observing a thin curtain of mist drawing along the tops of the hills. "He who watcheth the clouds shall want in harvest," said a third, quoting Scripture for encouragement. "I believe it will be a fine day, and perhaps a hot one," struck in Mr. Cox. "See! the crows are going off to the hills, and cattle are seeking the high lands—almost infallible signs of fine weather. But suppose the day should turn out showery? Wales is far grander under lowering skies than beneath a bright and glittering sun. I love to see the mists hanging about the mountain-tops, and the distant peaks almost black with intensity of colour. Let me also catch a glimpse of a horizontal streak of light between and

beyond those far-off peaks, just to indicate that it is not going to be stormy for ever!—to afford *one* spot of repose for the eye and mind to dwell on in the tempestuous scene—and I ask for no effect finer or better. Drive on, coachman!” And in this manner the little party chatted and passed the time on their way, may be, to Capel Curig, to depict some scene on the romantic river Llugwy; or still further on, where the picturesque bridge of Pont-y-garth spans the stream that comes tumbling down from tarns and lakes in the rugged hollows of Snowdon; or, taking an opposite direction, to essay their skill in transcribing the features of some lovely subject in the valley of the Lledr—most beautiful of all the valleys of Wales!

The author bears in lasting remembrance a delightful day spent in company with David Cox and two other friends beside the little mountain stream above-mentioned, whilst endeavouring to paint the romantic Bridge of Pont-y-garth and its surrounding scenery. The party started early from Bettws in the “Oak” car, an open vehicle, having a seat on each side, the door and steps at back, and the driver perched aloft on a box at front of the car—canvases, easels, colour-boxes, and the artists themselves, more than filling the carriage; whilst a couple of lads, engaged to look after the “traps,” sat on the shafts to the right and left of the driver. It was a somewhat heavy load for the horse, but he dashed along at a rattling pace; the keen morning air and the prospect of a fine day put all in high spirits; and the sketching-ground was reached in

good time for a fair day's work. Stations were speedily selected, the party being separated by short distances; easels were planted in convenient spots; canvases were fixed and made fast against the wind; palettes were "set," and painting soon commenced in earnest. Two or three hours' work had been done, and some progress made with the sketches, when luncheon time arrived; the painters for awhile joined company; lunch was eaten with a relish never to be forgotten, and washed down with water from a neighbouring spring, drank from an extemporised paper cup, or from the palm of the hand; and then the smokers drew forth pipe and cigar, and puffed away vigorously for a brief space with great apparent delight (the writer, not being a smoker, cannot conscientiously aver from experience that the pleasure was real!) and then the party separated once more for the afternoon's work. In an hour or so the wind arose boisterous and cold; coat collars were turned up, mufflers were tied about the neck; whilst poor Cox, who was seated in a rather exposed spot, was compelled to envelope his head in a large shawl, and, at a little distance, looked very much like an old Welshwoman busied over some mysterious operation by the river-side. Nevertheless, the day, on the whole, was a very enjoyable one; and by the time the car arrived on the scene to fetch the party back to dinner, Pont-y-garth, with the distant blue peaks of Snowdon behind it, the Glyder mountain on the right, the brawling stream tumbling among the boulders and grey stones in front, and other features of the romantic landscape, had been jotted

down in note-book or secured on canvas, according to the ability of each. One or two of these efforts might not, perhaps, have been very much to boast of, but the pleasure of the attempt to produce a representation of the charming scene was great, and the day's delights were such as not readily to be effaced from memory.

One of Cox's sketching companions on some of these occasions carried with him a box, constructed to hold every conceivable article requisite in painting from nature: canvases, colours, brushes, oils, varnishes, turpentine, and many things besides, in separate compartments, not forgetting a special division to receive his pipe—for he loved to take a few whiffs now and then, when resting from his labours, as did his friend Cox from a half cigar. This elaborate and comprehensive contrivance, planned by himself, he christened his "Convenient Box;" and he was usually occupied for at least half an hour before starting out to work in packing its contents, and in ascertaining that everything he should be likely to want was in its place. "Come along with you, friend Coleman!" Cox would cry out impatiently, marching to and fro before the house, quite ready himself. "What a long time you are keeping us waiting, packing that 'Convenient Box' of yours! Half the day will be gone before we start." Turning to another friend about to accompany him, and also waiting with him in the road, he said, "I should not be surprised if he were to forget something essential, after all his trouble—very likely his pipe. I'll put one in my pocket for him, at a venture." At length and at last

the "Convenient Box" was packed, and the little party got away, having to go a distance of two or three miles, so that it was late ere they sat down to their tasks, on the particular occasion alluded to, by the side of the river Conway, in a romantic part of the ravine not far from the Fairy Glen. After they had been painting some time, and were beginning to feel a little weary, Cox arose from his seat, and shouted to his companion, at work fifty yards or so higher up the river, "Friend Coleman, what say you to a pipe? I'm going to smoke a half cigar." "With all my heart, Mr. Cox," the other replied, and commenced hunting his box over for the pipe, which was nowhere to be found; Cox watching him all the time, amused at his look of surprise and vexation. "What is the matter now, friend Coleman?" "By George! Mr. Cox, I've come without my pipe. I can have no smoke at all." "Poor fellow!" Cox exclaimed, "I'm so sorry for you. I'm certain that 'Convenient Box' will be the ruin of you some day." Fumbling in his pocket, he held aloft the short pipe he had brought from the "Oak," and said, "Look at this, Coleman. I am like a father to you, and I hope you will think so." "By George! Mr. Cox, that is very kind of you indeed. What should I have done without a pipe?"

And so the day wore on, with turns of work at their pictures, and brief snatches of rest, when pipe and cigar were called into requisition, and conversation, with now and then a harmless practical joke, filled up the interval, until their vehicle appeared in sight to

convey them back to Bettws. Then all was hurry-scurry to pack up their "traps." Cox, whether he had finished his picture or not, would never be behind the proper dinner-hour if he could avoid it, and began to pack up the instant the carriage arrived. One or two of the party would probably have been thankful for an extra half-hour to complete what they had begun; but "No; it is time to go home," in decisive tones reached their ears from their inexorable chief; and so they were hurried away with their work unfinished. If in good health and spirits, David Cox worked rapidly, whether in oil or water-colour; and a few hours' painting made a great show towards a completed picture; whilst others—inexperienced, unpractised hands, perhaps—had done but little in the time, and that little far from well, when their more skilful friend had almost finished his work, for he seized on the leading features and salient points of his subject with ready grasp, and a few rapid strokes with a full pencil fixed them on the canvas with telling effect. However, they all were happy in having had an opportunity of seeing the master at work, and of beholding the result of his marvellous ability and his deep knowledge of Nature.

David Cox made the most of his time when on these sketching trips; and, in fact, during the whole of his stay at Bettws-y-coed. He was an early riser, and usually trotted off before breakfast, sketch-book in hand, to make a few "outlines," or do a "bit," to put by for future use. He would sometimes return from his early labours before his friends had come down from

their bedrooms, and would lash their windows with an angle-rod that frequently stood outside, shouting, "You lazy fellows! when are we to have breakfast? All the beauty of the day will be gone before we can get out. I have been down by the river, and have made three or four 'outlines,' whilst you have been snoring in bed!" In fact, he was always at work, or walking about, noting down "effects" and getting "bits," when not out for serious painting. By this continual industry he filled his portfolios with hundreds of sketches and studies; and thus his delightful works, fortunately for his admirers, are as "the sands of the sea-shore." For many years we have seen them on the walls of our exhibition-rooms, and they have become familiar to us as "household words." They have found their way into numberless homes, made bright by their presence, to keep alive, in minds contending with the cares of life, and engrossed with the pursuits of every-day existence, a love of the beautiful in nature.

When the weather was fine, Cox of course was to be found out-of-doors, hard at work in the fields, by the river-side, on the hill-tops, or among the fallen rocks at the foot of some lofty mountain range looking down on the Lledr valley, or casting its broad shadows across Llyn Idwal and the wild Pass of Nant Francon. But when rain had fallen for some days, and the roads had become almost impassable, and few could dare to sit out-of-doors, even for an hour, Cox was by no means idle, and found subjects and something to be done in the neighbouring stables and cow-sheds, and the cottage

interiors in the vicinity of the "Oak." Many charming works of this kind have emanated from his pencil, when wet or unsettled weather has compelled him to seek for subjects under shelter from the showers.

It has been amusing to note what curious and sometimes ludicrous subjects were taken up by artists, rather than remain unoccupied. The inn was examined from top to bottom, and if any part of it was discovered to be at all picturesque, some one of the brotherhood would soon set to work to make a picture from it. The servants' bedroom in the roof was found to be a "capital subject;" with its rickety old bedstead; its patchwork quilt of many colours spread over the humble pallet; the roof with massive beams and rafters sloping to one side, so as to almost touch the floor; its tiny window, admitting but a feeble ray of light (hardly sufficient to enable the artist to mix his tints) the greater portion of the chamber being shrouded in gloom; odds and ends of furniture—a broken chair—a clothes-box—a small worm-eaten table—a fragment of looking-glass stuck on the window-sill—a pair of cobbled shoes on the floor—several articles of dress lying about:—all combined to make an "admirable interior," which was depicted again and again. The scullery at the "Swan," a dark hole, with just a few pots and pans dimly visible through the gloom, and some lumps of coal stowed in one corner, was held to be a fine "Rembrandtish subject;" and if an old woman could be induced to sit in front, peeling turnips, or scouring a frying-pan, the picture was "a perfect Dutchman." Wet weather

compelled many an artist to set up his easel before that subject (Cox among the number) greatly to the annoyance of the good people of the house, who wanted to be going about their work; but the artists at that time did pretty much as they pleased. They were customers whom it would not have been wise to offend. Tourists were not so numerous then as at the present day; and inn-keepers were not so independent as they are sometimes now. Cottage interiors—of which there were several within easy reach, and extremely good subjects,—were of course the chief places of resort on wet days, and Cox made some admirable studies from the more picturesque of them. On one occasion he even painted a picture in oil of the interior of a cow-shed, with a couple of cows standing in the stalls, and a man lying asleep on the straw in a corner. Although not a very interesting subject, the colour was fine, and the work effective. The old church itself, at a distance of some few hundred yards from the “Oak,” and soon reached, without much fear of a wetting, was often utilised for painting purposes when the weather was especially bad; and artists might be seen at work inside, making pictures of the pulpit and the pews; or seated near the open door-way, painting the view outside—the venerable yews, and the old grey tombstones beneath them, and a glimpse of some far-off blue hill beheld through the sombre branches, and perhaps just an indication of the river Conway gliding along under the churchyard wall, (if it could not be *seen* from their station, it could undoubtedly be *heard* by an attentive ear); these

interesting features combined to make up a subject of a very pleasing character, which was frequently painted; and when, in addition, the open church door, with the grave-tools — mattock, shovel, besom, and the rest — stowed away in a corner behind, but not concealed; and the three or four time-worn steps leading down into the church — hollowed by the tread of many generations of worshippers — were introduced into the picture, a touch of sentiment of a more serious kind was imported which lent to the subject a greater charm. Even the "dry" arch of Bettws bridge — the well-known Pont-y-pair, that crosses the river Llugwy near the turnpike house (the one arch through which the water does not run, except at a time of unusually high flood) — even this arch had sometimes several artists sitting inside it, busily occupied in depicting what could be seen from that contracted space, although the rain might be descending in heavy showers, and a haze of mist and spray from the roaring torrent enveloped them and their pictures, and they sat shivering with cold in the draught of damp air that rushed through their uncomfortable place of shelter. Many a severe illness has been caught in that "dry arch" during the wet weather! and many an indifferent picture has been the result of working there under such unfavourable conditions!

During the summer of 1850, the author, with David Cox and other friends, was staying, as usual, at the "Royal Oak," for a little sketching. The weather for about a fortnight of the time was exceedingly bad; in fact, so wet that the little party could hardly leave the

house, even for a stroll. As for sketching from nature, that was quite out of the question. Cottage interiors, cow-sheds, stables, servants' bedrooms, had been used up. All in the little parlour were as wretched as could be. The author amused himself by writing some lines in the visitors' book, intended to be descriptive of the miserable state of things at home and abroad during that trying season, and is tempted to insert them here, because he thinks there is some little novelty in the theme, and also because they will afford an idea of the trying circumstances under which David Cox (as well as many others of his brethren) was occasionally called on for patience to endure the painful suspension from the work he loved. The lines—somewhat amended, perhaps—are as follows, and are ironically entitled—

SKETCHING-WEATHER AT BETTWS-Y-COED,
AUGUST, 1850.

See ! from the window artist eyes
Oft scan the unrelenting skies ;
Or with fixed vision long time stare
Abstractedly on empty air.
A crowd of faces oft appears,
Seen through the window's rainy tears,
That look distressed, retire in pain,
But, restless, soon gaze forth again.
For two long weeks there scarce has been
A day that we could call serene ;
Be-drenching rain and threatening skies
Have filled us with anxieties.
No sign of change ! the steady wind
Still blowing from sou'-west we find.
Above yon hill dense vapours rise
To endless shades and quantities,
Spread their black wings across the sky,
Then drop, in water, constantly.
Amid the dark no speck of blue

Gives hope of sunshine breaking through,
All is a compact, spongy gloom,
As though no change would ever come.
The rain descends in torrent floods,
Streams from the mountains, soaks the woods.
Like race-horse goes the river by,
Tearing along impetuously.
The road is miry, wet the grass—
So wet, no foot dare through it pass.
The lanes are brooks, well fed by rills
That flow in myriads from the hills;
The brooks are roaring floods, that flee
All froth and fury to the sea.
Trees bend 'neath every gust that blows,
And shake their hosts of dripping boughs;
The rustling leaves, the rain and wind,
With din of waterfalls combined,
Fill the damp air with mournful sound,
That saddens every heart around.
No living thing is seen abroad,
Within the fields or on the road;
The very dogs are scared away,
And pigs keep shelter through the day.
Within the house, in every eye
There glooms a blank despondency.
D. Cox upon the sofa lies,
And oft gives vent to doleful sighs;
Poor *Brown* looks *blue*; and *Bradley*'s sad;
And as to *Coleman*—he's nigh mad;
To work, or walk, he can't get out,
But round the parlour glides about:
He sits, he stands, he moans by fits,
Then lights his pipe, and smokes, and sits;
Goes to the window, gazes forth,
Views nought but gloom from south to north,
Then shudd'ring, seeks his chair once more,
And drops asleep—perchance to snore.
Roused from his slumbers, round he looks,
Sees the black sky and brimming brooks,
“No change!” he cries, “things *do* look grave!
By *George*! another pipe I'll have.”
'Tis sad to see us all together!
And sad to have such wretched weather

When morning with delusive smile
 Breaks o'er the hills—but to beguile—
 Flinging a watery gleam athwart
 The murky sadness of the heart,
 We venture out, and take our stand
 To limn the charms of this fair land.
 Our easel planted, forth we drag
 The palette and the palette-rag,
 Canvas and colours, brushes, stool,
 And every other painting-tool.
 Awhile we strive to match the sky
 In all its watery brilliancy,
 When rise the winds; the air grows chill;
 The clouds hang low upon the hill;
 Dark vapours congregate on high;
 The Sun, he blinks, then bids good-bye.
 Drop, drop—the rain begins to fall;
 Th' umbrella bends beneath the squall;
 And down go easel, sketch, and all!
 Rills pour from the umbrella-tips,
 And soak us well about the hips;
 Our pockets fill; our brushes swim;
 Our colour-box is full to brim.
 Down our wet pictures run big tears,
 That cause us many anxious fears;
 While dirt and flies and leaves of trees
 Stick to the paint in quantities.
 Vainly we work, in surly wrath,
 Our “medium” just like greasy broth;
 Be-drench'd by the descending flood,
 And midges sucking at our blood,
 We're fairly beaten; wind and rain
 Back drive us to our inn again.
 The artist's *gains*, oh, envy not!
 Nor let his *trials* be forgot!
 He'll scrape but little pelf together,
 While lasts this melancholy weather!

It has been said, in a previous chapter, that Cox, when out on one of his customary sketching-excursions, generally dressed in a grey suit of checked tweed—plain, “roomy,” and comfortable; he likewise wore a

cap of the same colour and material. His appearance sometimes led travellers who were passing the inn to mistake him for the landlord. On one occasion a horseman who was riding through Bettws, pulled up at the door of the "Oak," before which Cox was standing, and said to him "Landlord, give my horse a feed of corn." Cox was in person a fair-sized man, with ruddy complexion, and usually looked healthy and strong. There was a resident at the "Oak," of the name of Hoyle, a large man, and fat withal. These two were one day chatting at the inn door, when a vehicle with a couple of travellers passed. Cox overheard one say to the other, "Those two old chaps do credit to that house!"

David Cox had no particular affection for what is called "good living," but loved simple diet, and was extremely fond of boiled milk for supper. When at Bettws he generally supped on what the Welsh term "crowdie" (orthography doubtful), that is, milk thickened with oatmeal. Occasionally his friends joined him in this simple repast. When the time for the meal arrived, Cox would ring the bell (a small table bell, by-the-bye—there was no other then), and on Miss Mary Roberts entering the room he would exclaim, "Who joins me? I am going to have crowdie for supper. Will you? and you? and you?" half-a-dozen times repeated, if there were so many persons present. "Very good! crowdie for six, then, Miss Mary, if you please." Miss Mary would laugh and vanish. His fondness for milk clung to him to the last. A few years before his death, on the occasion of the presentation of his

portrait, when a large number of admiring friends had assembled round the hospitable table of his old acquaintance Mr. Charles Birch, to do him honour, so soon as the ceremony was over, and his health had been drunk, after dinner, feeling much wearied and overcome—for he was then in broken health, and extremely feeble—he said to his old friend Mr. C. W. Radclyffe, who was sitting near him, “Take me home, will you, Charles? I think it is time for me to have my milk.”

David Cox, during the author's acquaintance with him, was a regular attendant at divine service on Sunday, whether at home or abroad. When at Bettws (unless prevented by indisposition, or exceedingly tempestuous weather, he always went to church. Moreover, he liked to pay respect, and to see a proper respect paid, to all religious observances, and to things of a sacred and religious character. Once, when he was staying at Bettws—the writer was also there at the time—there were several gay, rattling, care-for-nothing young artists in the place—one of them a painter in water-colours of some reputation—who amused themselves by drawing on the whitewashed walls of the church porch and lych gateway, caricatures of the parson and clerk, with other humorous subjects. The parson was represented in the pulpit, preaching, and banging the cushion with his fist, while the old clerk, with two or three of the congregation near his desk, were fast asleep and apparently snoring. This caricature was cleverly executed in water-colours, and attracted much attention from the village folks when they went to

church on the following Sunday, some of whom shook their heads, and thought it was a very wicked thing for any one to have done in that place. Cox, when he came out from service, took notice of these caricatures, and was greatly disgusted. He determined to obliterate them without delay. "My goodness!" he said to a friend, "what will these poor people think of us, who are supposed to be men of education, and to know what is right and proper? How much it must shock them to see sacred persons and things ridiculed and made fun of! And this done upon the wall of the church itself, and done, too, by one of us, who ought to have set a better example!" As soon as night came on, he said to one or two friends at the "Oak," "Who will go with me to the churchyard, and carry some water and a brush?" A volunteer was soon forthcoming, and the pair sallied forth, Cox carrying a stable lanthorn, and his companion a pail of water. Within half an hour they returned, Cox evidently well pleased at what he had done. "There is not a vestige of the vile things left," said he. "If anybody should ask who rubbed them out, tell him I did!"

So long as David Cox was able to take a journey so far from home—in fact, up to within the last three years of his life—he failed not to pay his annual visit to his favourite Bettws. During his final visits he seldom ventured far from the "Oak" to sketch, contenting himself with getting "bits," and making slight drawings in the vicinity of the inn. Almost any day he might have been observed toddling in and out of

the house, or with a sketch-book under his arm, accompanied by a friend or regular attendant, jogging down to the old churchyard, to the side of the river, or to the "big meadow" (a large field at no great distance from the "Oak"), in which he had often loved to paint, as it was little frequented by visitors, and commanded fine views of the surrounding hills; and there for a few hours he would sit, making "outlines," colouring a "bit" that pleased him, or perhaps watching for fine sky effects, which he would dash upon his ready canvas with the facility of lifelong practice. After working for a short time in this manner, he would pack up his painting materials, put his sketch in the box, and go quietly back to the "Oak," or to the old farmhouse close by, where he latterly lodged, to his dinner in the middle of the day, for failing health and increasing weakness would not permit of his waiting for his principal meal, as he had been wont to do, till the close of the day, when work was over. The remainder of the day was spent in sauntering about at the front of the inn, chatting with old friends, watching the beautiful Llugwy as it glided gently along on the other side of the road, or smoking his cigar, seated at the open window of the pleasant little sitting-room. At length the time arrived when he could travel no longer, the favourite spot could be visited no more, but he would sit in his easy-chair by the fireside of his house at Harborne, recalling its delightful scenes to memory, and dwelling on the pleasant incidents which gave them, for him, a peculiar charm.

CHAPTER IX.

Work done at Home—Cox's Industry and Self-reliance—Range of Subjects—
Characteristics of His Works—His Three Distinctive Styles.

ON his return home from these annual visits to Bettws-y-coed, during a period ranging from the year 1844 to 1854, or nearly so, Cox, being then at his best, painted a large number of his finest and most important works in water-colour, and likewise in the more enduring vehicle of oil. Feeling refreshed and invigorated after every trip, and having derived a new stock of ideas from recent experiences, and a keener insight into beautiful Nature, he went to his easel in the quiet painting-room of Harborne, with a determination to do better things than he had ever done before. He worked with remarkable zeal and energy, and surprised his friends with a succession of charming works of greater excellence than any previously seen from his pencil. Not only were his water-colour drawings more masterly and of finer quality than before, but his pictures in oil exhibited a great advance in the management of material, and in the freedom with which he brought out his ideas and effects; the result being the production of many pictures, large and small, of surpassing merit. The art collections in the neighbourhood of Birmingham contained at his death a number of his works in oil, of great beauty and excellence; his prices being so low,

comparatively, his friends purchased with great avidity, often writing their names on the backs of blank canvasses, to secure for themselves whatever pictures might be painted upon them. Numbers of these beautiful productions have, by the death of their owners, been dispersed to all parts of the country, selling for sums that would have astonished the artist could he have been privileged to look only for a few short years into the future time, and earning for him fame that he would have prized far more dearly than wealth.

Among the more important of his oil pictures painted during the period referred to may be mentioned his large and grand works, "Views of the Vale of Clwyd," the second, and best, painted for Mr. George Briscoe of Wolverhampton. Cox received less than £100 for this fine work, which after his death sold for £2,500. Another picture of the same size—4 feet 8 inches by 3 feet 3 inches—entitled, "Collecting the Flocks," painted for Mr. Edwin Bullock of Handsworth, was likewise produced during this period. This picture, although inferior to the two others of this size (Cox painted only three of these dimensions), has also been sold for a considerable sum. It may be mentioned in this place that the artist once received from his friend Mr. Birch a commission to paint a pair of large pictures to be hung in the gallery at Metchley Abbey, on either side of his fine and famous picture of "The Lock," by John Constable, R.A. Cox was to put forth all his strength to rival that great work. The subjects selected were views in the Glen of "Foss

Noddyn," at Bettws-y-coed, well known to tourists at the present day by its fanciful name, the "Fairy Glen." The descent to the bottom of the glen at that time was not, as now, by a series of easy steps cut in the rock, but was very precipitous and slippery, and to an elderly person, somewhat nervous and not very firm on his feet, was not free from danger. Cox, to make himself safe, procured a strong rope, which was fastened to his body, and he was thereby let down gently to the bottom of the glen in a sitting position. He most probably did not relish this rather dangerous mode of descending the side of the ravine, as he never could be induced to venture a second time to the bottom of the Fairy Glen to paint, and never put more than the first day's work upon his large canvases. The pair of great competition pictures were never painted, and Constable's "Lock" maintained its regal supremacy.* A number of "Hayfield" subjects, of

* Mr. Thos. Creswick, R.A., painted an excellent picture of the "Fairy Glen" at Bettws-y-coed (purchased, if the writer mistakes not, by Vice-Chancellor Wigram, from the Royal Academy exhibition), which sent many a tourist and many an artist to the bed of the river Conway, to find the spot from which the view was taken. Scores of pictures of varying excellence have since that time been painted of the glen, from "*the very stone*"—so says local gossip—on which the popular artist sat; but not in all cases productive of similar *éclât* to their authors! Thousands of photographs have made known to the world, since Creswick's attempt, the striking features of the glen; and the way to it has been made plain and unmistakable by the tread of tourists' feet. There is now a house close by for the sale of refreshments (probably a lodging-house or an inn will be erected there before long); an easy path to the bottom of the ravine has been made, so that a child may descend with safety; a gate has been fixed at top to prevent any one viewing the glen without first paying a fee; and an attendant sits daily at a stall to sell photographic pictures of the

various sizes, and various in treatment, most of them of the finest quality, were the work of the time specified; notably that painted for Mr. Butler, afterwards Mr. S. Mayou's property; and the admirable one painted for Mr. T. Darby (on the wrong side of the canvas, by-the-bye), and now possessed by Mr. T. Page of Great Barr, near Birmingham. This latter by many good judges has been considered Cox's best picture of the "Hayfield" series. Besides these, there were "Going to the Mill," a fine upright picture (enlarged by an addition to the sky), sold with the Gillott collection; two or three pictures of the "Welsh Funeral;" "Bettws Old Mill," with a boy frightening the geese; one fine work, called the "Skylark;" another, "Changing the Pasture," one of the artist's loveliest productions; two of the "Skirts of a Forest;" "Caer Cennen Castle," a grand upright picture, sold for 2,000 guineas by the proprietor; "Counting the Flock," an evening effect, once in the collection of Mr. S. Mayou; another picture, with the

far-famed scene! The Fairy Glen has indeed become a regular show-place, and one of the chief attractions of Bettws; every excursionist who visits the place considering himself in duty bound to go and look at the glen; crowds of tourists during the "season" haunt the spot; picnic parties may any day be seen, seated on the stones in the river-bed or under the over-hanging trees, regaling themselves on sandwiches and bottled beer; orange-peel and waste paper lie about in every direction; a discordant noise of shouting and laughter arises from the very depths of the once silent ravine; and the charm of the olden time—when the glen was known to but few, and its deep silence was broken only by the sounds of rushing waters, or footstep of some solitary artist descending to his work—is for ever gone! The author has been informed that latterly, during the summer season, the number of excursionists visiting the "Fairy Glen" has been so great, that it has actually been found necessary to station a policeman at the spot, to maintain order!

same title, but a Welsh mountain scene, sold with Mr. Frederick Welch's pictures, after that gentleman's death at Moseley, near Birmingham. These admirable works, besides many of a smaller size, of various degrees of excellence, were produced during the period above mentioned.

In addition he painted a very large number of water-colour drawings, too numerous to particularise here; but a few of the more important were, indeed, some of Cox's greatest achievements in Art, such as the "Welsh Funeral" (Mr. Craven's); "Bolsover Castle;" several grand works of "Beeston Castle," a superb drawing, of large size; Windsor Park and Castle, with the Queen and her attendants issuing from the leafy covert in the distance, a herd of deer in the middle ground, and some grand oaks in front tossing their hoary arms in the air—this fine work, once Mr. Mayou's, is now the property of Mr. F. Craven. The same gentleman also possesses the magnificent drawing of "Besom-makers on Chat Moss," one of the productions of this busy period. "Peace and War—with Yokels," the "Green Lanes, Staffordshire," the "Skylark" (a lovely drawing), "Cross Roads: Asking the Way," "Penmaenmawr," "Caer Cennen Castle: the Rain Cloud," "Peat-gatherers returning from the Moors," "The Flood at Corwen," "Snowdon from Capel Curig," the "Mountain Top," superb drawings of "Lancaster and Ulverstone Sands," and very many others, far too numerous to mention, were executed in rapid succession, and altogether constituted an amount of work produced during the

eight or ten years specified which surprises from its high quality as well as from its quantity, and speaks volumes for the busy hand and teeming brain of the gifted artist who achieved such marvels. The catalogue of the Society of Painters in Water-Colours records the large number of one hundred and thirty-six drawings exhibited by Cox in the Pall Mall Gallery, during the ten years from 1844 to 1854, inclusive. He must have made many more than these in that time which were not exhibited.

There was a directness of aim in David Cox, which, coupled with untiring industry, will account for the great amount of work he was enabled to accomplish. He had a way of his own in looking at Nature, and in recording what he saw and felt, and lost no time in considering whether it would be better to endeavour to see with other eyes, and work according to other methods. He was satisfied with his own lights and gifts—they were *his*, and for him alone, and he was to do his best with them. Accordingly he laboured hard with the tools he found ready to his hands, and the result was an abundant product, which the world has appraised at a high value. There was a still small voice which constantly whispered in his ear the injunction, “Rely on yourself! Have faith in your own nature, and in the faculties with which you are endowed! Work! work! and do your best! Leave the result of your efforts in other hands!” And Cox did work; he accepted the guidance of his own gifts, and he relied wholly on himself. He never looked to

the right nor to the left for aids and helpers. He sought neither to create nor to imitate any particular School of art. He thought and felt for himself; ever putting into his works his own mind and feelings; and as a consequence of his direct method and singleness of purpose, his artless unaffected nature is seen in all he did. His aim in art was, to look at the subjects he purposed to delineate, with a view solely to their interesting qualities, and to treat them in a simple, natural, unaffected manner. His pictures have, therefore, an honest, faithful, and often a homely look—like a bundle of May-blossoms, or a cluster of daisies cut out of the green sward. They appeal to us like the familiar faces of old friends. They win their way to our hearts at once, and are refreshing as a summer breeze. Not one of them ever says to us, “Now, look at me. I am a miracle of art! I address myself to an educated, highly-cultivated taste, and none other can appreciate me or measure my excellence!” No; but they say, one after another, “I am that sweet green lane, down which you loved to stroll when a child, to pluck the blue-bells on the hedge-banks, and the hawthorn-bloom from the boughs that overhung the path! I am that breezy common you have often scoured across with your play-mates, when the gorse was in full flower, and the gipsies encamped in the heather, and the windmill whirled its sails in the fresh gale, like a thing of life, and you were a boy, let out from school on a holiday, blithe as the lark that carolled above your head! I am that rocky stream, winding among the hills, and beneath the

verdant screen of tangled branches, down which, rod in hand, you wandered for hours when youth was growing into manhood, in search of spotted trout or silvery salmon, with no cloud on enjoyment, but rejoicing in health and a contented mind ! I am that delightful meadow, green as an emerald, dotted with browsing cattle and white-fleeced sheep, and spangled with buttercups and daisies, in which you often whiled away an hour at eventide or early morn in the pleasant days gone by, when life was opening like a fairy vision, and your young heart was full of hope and love for all things beautiful ! I am that far-away blue hill you first beheld when you made your earliest excursion into dear old Wales, and which drew you, magnet-like, mile after mile, determined, though footsore and weary, to ascend its rugged slopes, and to stand ere sunset upon its lofty summit ! I am that far-stretching, desolate moor, its boundaries mingling with the cold grey sky, where huge blocks of stone lie among the heather, and ribbed rocks crop up from the earth's mossy breast, and where nought living is seen for miles but a few mountain-sheep nibbling the sweet turf, or a few peat-gatherers laden with fuel for the cottage fires ! I am that splintered ridge, the summit of the mountain, where the storms of ages have done battle in the stern winters, and grey mists whirl round and round shrouding them from sight, or parting now and then, and showing grim peaks and inaccessible recesses, where the kite or eagle nestle safely with their young, and on whose topmost crags you have stood after the toilsome ascent, proud as

the warrior in the hour of victory ! I am that silvery beach, which in the summer heat drew you from the dusty town, from office and workshop, to saunter along its smooth, dry sands, to be soothed by the murmur of the ripples softly falling on the shore, or awed by the rush of storm-waves leaping in great breakers to your feet ! I am that mouldering ruin, half-hidden in coeval trees, and screened from the winds by soft surrounding hills, which you visited when the evening shadows of life were falling across your path, and you reflected on the approach of old age and feebleness, or, may be, were preparing for the dread parting that comes to all. And last of all—I am that sweet country churchyard, with its deep funereal yews, venerable for age, solemn in association, and casting soft glooms on the crumbling grave-stones that cluster beneath their shade, and where you have thought of rest, a sleep unbroken !” This is what the infinitely varied works of David Cox seem for each of us to say in our private ear ; and so, learning the secret of the master’s power, and making it our own, we love them dearly from the first glance, and recall the noble simplicity of him who has revived such recollections, and roused such emotions in our heart. For how many years may not those of us “whose way of life has fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf,” have been charmed with his beautiful works in the public galleries and private collections of the country ! Among the “miracles of art” which from time to time have graced those displays—self-conscious, laboured, pretentious, “learned” in the latest talk and slang of art—how

refreshing it has been to turn to the truthful and simple delineations of Nature which emanated from the pencil of David Cox ! We recognised them at a glance, even afar off ; we could single them out by an indescribable charm, which the works of no other painter possessed, and which filled us with admiration for them and their author ! Their honesty—their simplicity—their delicious colour and sweet atmospheric effects—the happy incidents introduced—the times—the seasons—the beaming sunshine and gathering storm—all struck home to the affections at first sight, and filled us with gratitude to the genius who had given us such delight.

The variety of David Cox has been spoken of : indeed, he has painted almost every conceivable subject within the range of art—flowers, fish, objects of still life, portraits, figures, cottages, mansions, churches, palaces, stables, and cowsheds ; street architecture, grand and picturesque buildings at home and abroad ; sea calms and storms ; brook and river scenery—the latter often teeming with water-craft of every description ; landscapes—how many, and how varied in subject and treatment ! From a simple weedy bank, with but a few dock-leaves, a straggling briar, and a cluster of ferns or tufts of flowering grass to give it interest, yet sparkling with real morning dew, or touched with an intense gleam of evening sunlight, to a majestic range of lofty mountains rejoicing in the glow of a summer day, or solemn with gloom, and dragging mists, and lowering, tempestuous skies—from a bit of fern-fringed rock, “silvered with mosses

grey," lying in the bed of a torrent, on the flank of some giant hill, with the water foaming around it, and overhanging branches flecking it with shade—or where, among the great boulder-stones thrown about by eruptions in the volcanic age, it has lain for centuries, exposed to all the rough usage of elemental strife on the bleak bare top of the desolate mountain moor—to a far-stretching view of sea and plain, hill and woodland, flashing torrent and winding river, nestling village, farm, and field, and smoky town, with all the varied effects of sunshine, shadow, mist, storm, winter gales, and quiet summer days: the figures and incidents he introduced into his pictures are as various as the subjects he painted, and are always perfect in their fitness to the scenes and places. They usually presented themselves to his mind when the subject in hand was arranged and commenced, landscape and incident being worked out together, so that a delightful unity was the result. With some landscape artists the figures and incidents are often an afterthought, fitted into the picture when the landscape is completed, and frequently with poor success. One sees that, to use a technical phrase, they are literally "put in." Cox, as a rule, adopted the contrary practice, deciding on his incidents and figures when he settled the treatment of the entire subject, the work in all its parts thus progressing simultaneously to a happy ending. He was also especially careful as regards the costumes and draperies of his figures, so that they should be true to the localities in which they were placed. The men and women

he introduced into his Welsh landscapes are habited in the sober-coloured dresses usually worn in the country; the conventional red cloaks and pretty garments of many artists he studiously avoided. Being true to nature, his figures and incidents have commonly an interest in themselves, apart from the landscape, which lend an additional interest to these also. The titles of a few of his pictures will explain this:—"The Common: Cross Roads—Asking the Way," "Mountain Scene: Shepherds Collecting their Flocks," "On the River Lledr: Searching the Salmon-trap," "Hay-harvest: Going to the Hayfield," "A Rural Scene: Children Flying their Kite," "Lancaster Sands: Market People Returning," "A Worcestershire Landscape: Children Listening to the Skylark," "Welsh Hills: Peat-gatherers Coming from the Moors," "Bettws-y-coed Church: a Welsh Funeral." Hundreds of natural incidents like these are to be found in his works. He was the painter of what he saw, both in landscape and people; and he painted only what he saw.

As a water-colour painter, David Cox may be said to have had three broadly marked and distinctive manners. His early style was hard and dry, resembling to a great extent the styles of some of his contemporaries of the early part of this century, the colour being neutral, and the handling deficient in freedom; but occasionally, even in these works, may be detected indications of the command which in course of time he was destined to acquire over his materials and the effects with which he has dealt. The books of lessons

which he published when at Hereford contain highly characteristic examples of his method of handling, colouring, and treating his subjects at that stage of his career. In his second manner—in what may be termed his middle period, embracing a long stretch of years: say, from the time when he left Hereford until his removal to Harborne, or nearly so—he exhibited far greater command over his materials and resources of every kind; employed purer and more powerful colour—was more playful, so to speak, in his treatment of subject—more facile in his touch—dealt with the transient and poetical effects of nature with readier skill—finished more elaborately—and altogether was far more graceful and captivating. The drawings which he executed towards the latter part of this period are those which have been most popular, and by the multitude have been considered his best works. At all events they are those which in the picture-market are found the most saleable productions of the artist. His third and last manner is undoubtedly the grandest, finest, and most striking. It is characterised by great power and depth of colour, much refinement in feeling and expression, large generalised views of nature, daring effects, vigorous intrepid execution. Many of the drawings he produced at this period are on rough paper, of which he was very fond, and their immense power beats down everything beside them, the work of other masters. This style, some critics—may we not say, for want of knowing better?—have designated “coarse,” “dauby,” and “blotty;” one went so far as to describe them

compendiously as “mere fluff and splash ;” but every thoughtful and educated student of art and nature knows that the painter was at the height of his power when he produced these magnificent works, was thorough master of his art and all his resources—had achieved a long succession of triumphs over difficulties encountered in depicting the multitudinous phases and effects of nature—that his hand, the ready servant of a richly stored mind, obeyed his will with unwavering precision ; and that the ideas and impressions which he has recorded in this bold, daring manner are the truest and finest he has given to the world.

CHAPTER X.

Home Life—Friends in Council—"The Skylark."

GREENFIELD HOUSE, Harborne, the last residence of David Cox, will long be remembered by those of his friends who had the privilege of an intimate acquaintance with him, as one in which many delightful hours were spent in company of the man whose genius they acknowledged, and whose loveable qualities of mind and heart endeared him to all. There was nothing in the external appearance of the house to attract attention. It was modest and old-fashioned, containing a front parlour, with a bow-window looking into the garden; another smaller sitting-room adjoining it, only occasionally used; and a kitchen on the same level, with a particularly light, cheerful, and cleanly look, roomy and comfortable, with generally a fitch of bacon and some hams hanging from the ceiling. Mrs. Fowler and Mercy, the servant, took great pride in this kitchen, which was always scrupulously clean and tidy. The "master" usually sat in the parlour at the front. There he frequently worked at his drawings, when the weather was too cold to sit in his painting-room up-stairs, and always in the evening, by lamp-light, when alone, and not expecting friends to drop in for an hour's pleasant chat. The garden attached to Greenfield House was of

a good size, well stocked with fruit trees and vegetables, and had a leafy and cheerful look, frequently enticing the "master," for a brief space, from easel and canvas, to saunter down its clean-kept walks for a quiet "smoke," a breath of pure air, and a glimpse of Nature's refreshing green.

In this unpretending but comfortable residence, David Cox passed the last eighteen years of his life—in the main, very happy years. It is true that here he was bereaved of the wife of his bosom, and left to find his way to the grave a solitary old man; but his compensations were many, and his after-blessings brought joy and thankfulness to his heart. The life he passed at Greenfield was very quiet, but one wholly after his own taste and choice. The occupations of each day were very much alike. Soon after breakfast he went up-stairs into his painting-room (unless the weather were specially cold), and worked upon the picture in hand, or turned over his sketches to select a subject for a work about to be commenced. Then he would come down, and, if the day were fine, walk about his garden for a few minutes, noting the growth of vegetables, fruits, and flowers, and taking a few whiffs from the half-cigar of which he was so fond. Then up-stairs again to work, till dinner was ready, about half-past one o'clock. Occasionally he would walk as far as Birmingham (accompanied by a boy with a basket) to do a little marketing; to call on friends, or perhaps to deliver a small picture which had been bespoken by one of his "patrons." After dinner he would again enjoy

a half-cigar for a few minutes, probably take a short nap; then up again to work till tea-time. After tea, friends then dropped in, to sit an hour or two with him, to bring the news from town, and look over his portfolios of drawings; one of the party becoming "showman" for the night, placing the drawings one after another on the small table-easel, whilst the others, with the painter himself among them, sat in a semicircle looking at the beautiful transcripts of nature, and freely commenting upon them. Cox always expressed great pleasure when any particular work called forth from those around him exclamations of delight, with perhaps a clapping of hands, and a request that it might not be replaced by another for a short time. He would say, "I am glad you like *that* so well. I always liked it myself." If any alteration were suggested in a drawing or sketch, he would receive the hint with respectful attention, and would modestly say, "Well, well! perhaps it would be better so. I think you are right." Those pleasant evenings will be long remembered by such of his friends as are still living: a number, alas! now sadly thinning. If alone, at night, he lighted his lamp when the evenings were long and dark, and went to work again—down-stairs this time, in his usual sitting-room—taking up a sheet of *rough* paper, which he delighted to paint on, and, striking out some fine effect of sunshine and shadow, of cloud and tempest, which his quickened imagination enabled him to conceive, produced in a short time what he called a "cartoon"—a subject or study to be treated with

greater care, in another form, on a future occasion. Many of these "cartoons" were made during the long evenings of autumn and winter, and some of them were remarkably fine, requiring but slight alteration by daylight to complete them as pictures. A little change of colour here and there, a hastily-drawn form corrected, a line modified, a figure or incident brought out with clearer effect, and the work was finished. Rough these "cartoons" were, no doubt—what many people would call "blotty" and "undefined"—but the conceptions embodied were often grand, the effects most striking, the colour frequently magnificent. They were full of imagination, suggestiveness, mystery; in one word, of genius.

It always gave David Cox great pleasure to see his friends — especially those who were on an intimate footing with him—at Greenfield House. If anything kept them away for more than a week, he would think that something serious had occurred, and would be uneasy until he saw them again. Occasionally, a little note would be written to make inquiries, or to urge them to pay him a visit, assigning various reasons why he wished particularly to see them. The following letter, received by the writer, is of this character. Simple as it is, it shows the hearty feeling of the artist for his friends :—

Greenfield, Harborne, January 29th, 1849,

Two o'Clock.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—It occurs to me how very much I should like to see you this afternoon, and if you are not engaged, pray

oblige me by coming up to tea. I want most particularly to see you, on several matters. I have several new oil-pictures begun; and I have made such havoc and alterations in my large mountain scene! but am in great hopes I have improved it. My friends here say I have very much. [This was the picture painted for Mr. Bullock, of Handsworth, near Birmingham, entitled "Collecting the Flocks." The subject is a grand one—the treatment fine—but the effect is somewhat heavy, and the colour opaque, in consequence of the alterations and re-paintings alluded to. Cox could not please himself when painting it, and *laboured* it a good deal. It was never quite satisfactory to him or his friends. The note continues:—] Besides the above, I have made a large purchase, and want your opinion. Pray do come.

Yours very truly,
D. Cox.

Then, on the other side of the paper, was an urgent postscript:—

I hope, my dear friend, if you really cannot come this evening, you will *to-morrow*; but this is a fine afternoon, and I hope you will come. Besides all I have said on the other side, I want to have your advice on two subjects for my large drawing, and there is no time to be lost. *I must begin.*—D. C.

The "large drawing" here spoken of was doubtless Cox's principal drawing for the ensuing exhibition of the Water-Colour Society of that year. It was his custom, about the time when this letter is dated, to put aside all his oil pictures in progress, and set earnestly to work on drawings for the coming exhibition. He liked to summon his friends together on such occasions, to look over his sketches, and confer with them as to which he should select to finish for the annual show. The subject of the principal drawing was always a matter for the gravest consideration, and some delay

usually took place before it was finally decided. Sometimes he would work several days upon a subject selected, but if it did not progress to his satisfaction, he would put it aside, and take up another. The last large work he completed (for the exhibition of 1859) was a grand study of the Falls of the Llugwy, at Pont-y-pair, Bettws-y-coed. This had hung for some time in his sitting-room, admired by all who saw it. It was commenced on a small sheet of paper, Cox intending at first to represent only a portion of the Falls; but as he proceeded with his work, liking what he had done, he drew another part of the subject before him, on another similar piece of paper; and then another, and then a fourth, until he had taken in the magnificent scene in all its fulness. When he returned home, he had all these separate sheets laid down on a panel, and carefully united, so that the divisions were scarcely perceptible at the proper distance for seeing the drawing, which from its size, and having been executed on rough paper, compelled the observer to retire for some paces to appreciate the full effect. This grand sketch the artist, by the advice of his friends, decided to send to the exhibition; and after he had for a short time worked upon it, the result was highly satisfactory. It is undoubtedly one of the most impressive and important works he ever produced, and, when exhibited, met with a purchaser on the opening day. The author remembers supplying him with a descriptive quotation for the catalogue, taken from Thomson's "Winter," which pleased him greatly:—

Resistless, roaring, dreadful, down it comes
From the rude mountain and the mossy wilds,
Tumbling through rocks abrupt.

Mr. David Cox, the younger, generally came down from London to visit his father for a week or two at Christmas; and during his stay there was usually a pleasant gathering of friends, and a grand overhauling of sketches and summer work, when Mr. David, as he was commonly called, would officiate as "showman," setting up on the table-easel the drawings for the evening treat. This periodical visit was always looked forward to with great pleasure by the old man, who never seemed so happy as when his son was staying with him. Mr. David had much to do when he came down in assisting his father in many ways—preparing paper, mounting sketches, advising as to exhibition work, receiving and calling on friends.

David Cox had many warm and attached friends, who frequently called to see him at his Harborne residence. Some of these were the possessors of valuable works of art by the most eminent masters of the day, and were desirous of enriching their collections by the addition of as large a number of their friend's productions as they could obtain; accordingly, commissions for pictures, large and small, poured in upon him, some of which he executed, but many were never commenced. He was usually reluctant to complete works that had been bespoken; he appeared to lose interest in them as soon as an intending purchaser had written his name on the back, preferring to take up some fresh subject

which no one had seen—the idea of which had probably occurred to him as he entered his painting-room in the morning—and on this he would work until the picture was finished, when it was gladly carried off by the first person who had the chance of seeing it. Large pictures he speedily tired of; they gave him a great deal of trouble; he could not keep up the fire necessary by continuous labour to carry them successfully to the end; and he never appeared to work at them with the same pleasure as at his smaller pictures. Consequently he painted but few large landscapes in oil; the majority of his works are of small dimensions, and such as he could dash off with comparative ease. These are his happiest productions, full of spirit and of the evidences of his impulsive genius; and many of them are without doubt comparable to the best works of the British School in landscape art. His mind was exceedingly fertile and inventive, teeming with new ideas which he was anxious to record before the freshness of them had passed away. This fact will in some measure account for the large number of unfinished works which he left at his death. He would often put by the picture in hand to make a quick record of some “idea,” as he termed it, which had suddenly occurred to him, and in which for a time he was greatly interested, to the exclusion of every other; but after working for a little while at the subject, he was overmastered by another “idea,” possessing new attractions; and the previous work, partly finished, was then laid aside till a more convenient season, which frequently did not arrive.

He was thus continually wandering away to "fresh woods and pastures new."

Among the friends who often called at Greenfield, and who were ever glad to be allowed to spend a few hours in his company, were several brother-artists of humble repute, who were struggling up the long and wearisome "Hill Difficulty," and who were frequently discouraged and down-hearted. To these he was especially kind; was ever glad to see and welcome them under his roof. Many a valuable lesson has he given to painters of this class; many useful hints to guide their future labours; many a time has lent them his works to copy, or to aid them in overcoming the difficulties with which they were contending. "Well," he would, perhaps, say to one, "what are you painting now?" "I am endeavouring, sir, to paint a subject that gives me much trouble, and I cannot succeed to my satisfaction." Inquiring what the subject was (one in the neighbourhood probably), "Oh!" he would reply, "I know it. I painted it myself *forty years ago!* I will look for the drawing, and give it to you." The writer of this Memoir, who benefited by such kindly help and counsel, has one of these kind presents still, and hopes to retain it as long as he lives. He can truly say the years of his acquaintance with David Cox were among the happiest of his life, and whenever he drew nigh to the old house at Harborne it was with the most delightful and affectionate anticipations. Sad was the day when the kind-hearted friend was carried to his last long home in Harborne churchyard, and the familiar

habitation was for ever closed to those who loved him so well.

There was always a little stir and a gathering of artistic friends at Greenfield House when some picture of interest and importance—a commission, perhaps, from one of Cox's numerous patrons—was approaching completion. The artist was anxious to do his best, and gladly availed himself of any suggestions likely to render the work more effective. "Well, what do you think of my picture?" he would ask. "Most lovely, Mr. Cox; the best you have yet painted. It does not require another touch." "I am glad to hear you say so. But I have been thinking that the sky wants a little more movement. The clouds would be better if they appeared to go faster before the breeze. I want to show a proper hay-making day—bright and sunny, of course, but with a brisk, drying wind sweeping across the fields, and making the fleecy clouds speed along the sky at a greater pace than they seem to be going now. To-morrow I must try what I can do to improve this. My sky wants more breeziness put into it." "Perhaps it does, Mr. Cox. "Ah! I thought you'd agree. Why didn't you say that at first?"

The writer calls to mind a couple of lovely pictures, painted in 1849, for Mr. E. A. Butler, of Birmingham, and which for some considerable time adorned the end of that gentleman's drawing-room. They were the delight of every one who saw them, from their great beauty and faithful rendering of nature. One of them was a light, bright, and breezy hay-field picture, pro-

bably the second-best work of this subject that Cox painted, and was the identical picture which gave rise to the conversation above recorded. It was afterwards in the possession of Mr. S. Mayou of Birmingham; as also was the companion picture, entitled, "The Skylark." The artist was undoubtedly in his happiest mood when he executed these two charming works. He received £40 each for them; and since his death they have been sold for more than 4,000 guineas the two! The subject of the latter picture—"The Skylark"—is simple, but extremely captivating. The scene is taken from some rising land in the neighbourhood of Harborne, looking across a stretch of green pasture dotted with cattle, with here and there intersecting hedgerows and cottage roofs peeping among the trees in the middle distance; while a far-off range of low-lying hills, just rising above the horizon, and dimly visible, unites the landscape with the sky. In the foreground is a clump of fine trees, their foliage turned up by the passing breeze, and full of movement; and near them, at a stile, cottage children are clustered in a picturesque group, listening with rapt attention to the song of a lark carolling in the blue heavens. One of the elder children is holding up an infant, which stretches out its arms, and strains its sight to discover the little warbler. The landscape, so fresh and lovely, and the incident, so natural, renders this picture a source of never-failing delight to all beholders; it was considered one of the artist's most successful productions. The author, in a few lines which he published when the picture was exhibited in Birming-

ham, endeavoured to interpret to his readers the thought and sentiment embodied in the work, and to awake in their minds the pleasant memories and emotions which the picture called up in his own. The lines are introduced here because they appear to the author to show, as he conceives, what was probably passing through the mind of David Cox when he produced this beautiful work, and also because when read to the painter one evening at the house of Mr. Butler, and in the presence of the picture, he exhibited a degree of emotion which testified to the truth of the exposition they were designed to set forth:—

“THE SKYLARK.”

Sweet passage in the early days of life,
Which Memory holds in her embrace till death !
That blissful time we all remember well—
Still sparkling with the dews of childhood's morn—
When, like these little ones, *we* sallied forth,
Enticed by summer's sun, soft air, and sky
Of liveliest blue just freckled o'er with white,
To cull gay posies in the pleasant fields.
How fair were all things then, when all was new !
What rapturous emotions thrill'd the breast !
To our young eyes the heav'n above us wore
A brightness like its Maker's face. Green earth
To us was something more than beautiful,
And look'd as it can never look again.
The very meadow-grass we gamboll'd in,
Alive with sunshine, swaying in the wind,
Filled our young souls with joy unspeakable.
Delighted did we wander, on and on,
Knee-deep in freshest verdure and bright flow'rs,
Hunting the buttercups from mead to mead,
To swell the golden bundles that we bore :
Hosts plucked we, in the pleasures of our hearts;
Keeping the best, the poor we flung away,

Leaving a flowery trail across the fields,
By which the youngling runaways were tracked.
How oft we chased the gorgeous butterfly,
That like some living flow'r went flutt'ring past !
How oft into the chiming brook we peep'd,
Stealing by soft approaches to its edge,
To see the tiny minnow dart away !
The singing-bird that perch'd upon the twig
Close by our side, unfrighten'd, held us oft
To listen to the sweetness of its song.
And shall we e'er forget the thrill of joy
That shook our little frame, when from the ground
The glorious lark upsprang, and soar'd to heav'n,
Flooding the sky with wondrous melody !
How breathless for a moment did we stand,
Fearing to scare th' ecstatic prince of song,
And with the magic of his strain entranc'd !
Heedless of us he wing'd his giddy flight
Into the far, far blue, and there up-poised
Upon the proudest pinnacle of air,
Hurl'd his wild notes, all furious, headlong down.
Oh ! then we leapt, and ran with all our speed,
And mounted on the top bar of the stile
To bring us nearer to the fount of song.
Long stood we there enchain'd, and in our joy
Held up the chuckling baby in our arms,
That he might hear the unseen melodist—
The very babe—who stretch'd his hands and crow'd,
And strain'd his sight to find the vocal speck !
Thus fixed, we stood a spell-bound group, until
The glorious warbler, tiring of his song,
Gave the last fragments as he wheel'd to earth,
And swift descending shot into his nest.
Then we were free once more to ramble on.

Oh, happy time ! oh, blissful early days !
Can ye no more return, to let us taste
The keen delight, fresh feeling, happiness
Immense, unspeakable, we knew when young ?
Is there no hope that we again may view
The bright, green earth, and all fair things around,
As we beheld them when our morning sun
First clear'd the dim horizon of the world ?
For one blest hour, oh ! can we not enjoy

Life as we did when Maying in the fields?
When flow'rs, and running waters, and the voice
Of singing-birds had charms they now have lost?
When the small minnow held us by the stream—
And when we marvell'd at the skylark's song?

'Tis vain to ask!—those days are gone for aye
With the felicity that made them sweet!
And even memory must task her powers
To show us, through the clouds fast gath'ring round,
Aught of the bliss and brightness of our morn.

Thanks to the magic of the painter's art,
Thanks to the genius which thus has given
A key t' unlock the stores of memory,
And set before our gladdened thoughts once more
Things slumb'ring in the twilight of the mind!
While gazing on this pictured scene, we seem
(With such fine skill 'tis wrought) to draw our breath
Amid the freshness of the summer fields;
The balmy gale goes sighing through the trees;
The cattle low afar; the dome of heav'n
Rings with the music of the merry lark;
And looking on the children at the stile,
We almost fancy we are young again!

CHAPTER XI.

Cox's Methods of Painting in Water-colour and in Oil.

To art-students and amateurs it will be interesting to learn something of David Cox's methods of working in oil and water; of the colours used by him; and of his materials generally. A short chapter may therefore be usefully devoted to this subject. It is based upon frequent opportunities of observing him while at work.

In painting in water-colours he for many years used only the old hard cake colours, which he ground in saucers, large or small, according to the dimensions of the drawing in hand. Afterwards he adopted the moist colours of modern invention. His range of pigments was strictly limited to those of a simple, and what may be termed an old-fashioned kind. When he made his second sketching excursion into Wales, in the year 1806, his colours were only three or four (and these, for convenience, were ground up and put into bottles previous to starting) — lake, gamboge, indigo, and probably Indian red — perhaps also a brown of some kind. In course of time he increased the number of his colours; cobalt, vermilion, light red, yellow ochre, sepia, burnt sienna, brown-pink, and one or two more, were added to his colour-box. Emerald-green was also seen there, but of this he used little, merely for an

occasional touch on the draperies of the figures, the housings of saddle-horses, or on the mossy coating of a stone or tree trunk. He cared nothing for the "pretty" pigments of modern days. With large sable pencils, well filled with the required tints, he flooded and saturated his paper, so that it should be thoroughly stained, to insure the durability of his work, securing his effects generally at the first trial. A few sharp, brisk, and decisive touches afterwards gave the finish and character desired. The author has seen him on wet days, when in Wales, working in the house on three or four drawings at the same time. To begin, he mixed a quantity of sky-colour sufficient for all, if he intended them to be somewhat alike in tints—say, showing various modifications of grey—and then taking up one outlined sketch after another, he worked as fast as he could with a large brush, the colour running down his paper in streams, cloud forms and other peculiarities being rapidly shaped and indicated. Whilst one drawing was drying he proceeded with another, taking each up in proper order, gradually progressing with his subjects, introducing colour in the nearer parts and objects, and securing light, shadow, effect, until the work assumed a finished appearance. Long practice and a profound knowledge of nature enabled him to do this with wonderful facility, and to give to his drawings that expression of truth and fidelity for which they are remarkable. Many of his outline sketches were drawn with charcoal; some of them with black chalk. He

would put in the shadows and darker parts with great spirit, drawing the forms characteristically and firmly, and would then go over the whole with plenty of colour, and rapidly, leaving the chalk or charcoal to show through. Sometimes the effect was very happy. Cobalt was his favourite colour for the blue of the sky; this, mixed with light red, or vermilion, or occasionally with a little lake, with the addition perhaps of a small portion of yellow ochre, represented the shadowed parts of the clouds and the extreme distances of the pictures. From the remote features he worked downwards to the middle grounds, breaking into warmer and more positive tints, marking forms more distinctly, and increasing in power by the introduction of quiet greens and other local colours of the proper atmospheric hue for the distance—his greens were compounded of indigo, lake, yellow ochre, or gamboge. In his fore-grounds he used the transparent and more powerful colours—indigo and gamboge, indigo and brown-pink, indigo and sepia or vandyke brown, sometimes enriched with burnt sienna or lake. Raw sienna (in water-colour) he rarely or never employed. Body colour, so much in vogue at the present day, he studiously avoided, except for a sharp touch here and there on the figures, or for very bright lights on the details of the fore-grounds, but always in the smallest quantity. He belonged emphatically to the school of pure water-colour painters. It is true that occasionally he executed drawings entirely in body colour, but merely as experiments, or as a mere passing freak; these are much inferior to his

works of the usual kind. There is one of these in the collection of Mrs. H. Betts of Birmingham, presented to that lady by the artist. It is a classical kind of composition, somewhat in the manner of John Martin. Cox happened to see it in a shop window in London, long after he had painted it, when it bore the name of Martin, much to his surprise. He went into the shop and bought it. Many of his latter productions were upon a coarse, low-toned paper manufactured in Scotland, of the kind used for wrapping up reams of the better sort of paper. Of this, although full of specks, and sometimes creased, he was very fond, as it enabled him to obtain great power and richness of colour at once, and facilitated the production of those solemn, grand effects by which many of his later works are characterised. Some of these, from their immense power, give the impression of having been painted in a medium different from water. The specks alluded to—occasionally large, dark, and prominent—were conspicuous sometimes in the skies of his drawings, and had an effect that was far from being agreeable. The author observing one day several unusually large specks in the sky of a drawing, said to him, “Whatever will you do with those great specks, Mr. Cox? I can see them half across the room!” “Specks! specks!” he replied, “why, put a couple of wings to them, and turn them into birds!” And he did so at once. A sharp, dark touch on either side, with another touch in the middle, transformed them in a moment into rooks; putting life and animation into the picture, by suggesting a

breeze that was whirling about in the air and around the tops of the trees, and almost carrying the rooks along with it.

His method of painting in oil was as simple and straightforward as in water. He used in that medium none but the old-fashioned colours which he thought would be permanent, avoiding the captivating pigments of the modern palette. The chromes he never touched; he said they would "throw his pictures out of tune." His brightest yellows were Naples and lemon yellow; the French Naples yellow in particular he was very fond of using, being, as he said, such a "sweet colour;" and he employed it freely in the composition of his light greens for herbage and foliage, likewise in the golden hues of sunrise and sunset in the painting of skies. For skies and distances unobscured by clouds—summer skies in sunny weather—his blue was sometimes cobalt, as in his water-colour drawings, but more frequently it was French ultramarine, as being a little warmer in tint. He much liked yellow ochre, and also raw umber; the latter he occasionally touched into the grey hues of his clouds with happy effect. He painted for the greater part with solid colour, except in the nearer passages of his pictures, when he laid first a transparent ground of sufficient depth and richness to support whatever details he intended to introduce upon it—a ground composed of raw sienna and black, or black and burnt sienna, or raw umber and raw sienna, or raw sienna with perhaps a little burnt sienna and Prussian blue, or possibly Vandyke brown, with something of a cool tint, of the

requisite intensity for powerful shadows and broad masses of dark. On this ground, whilst it was in a wet state, he painted the local forms and details in their proper colours, being careful not to cover the whole of the transparent underground. He rarely pumiced or scraped. He was not much of a glazer, as he usually painted up to the desired tone at once; but sometimes he passed a little transparent colour over portions of his foregrounds, to tone down or to enrich details which had been left too bright or seemed too opaque. His skies and distances he blended a little with a softening brush, to give the effect of remoteness to those parts, by removing hard lines and severe edges. In painting the foliage of trees, if naturally dark in hue, or rendered dark by cloud or other shadows, whether near the front, or in the middle distance of his subject, he mixed French blue, or perhaps a little Prussian blue, and raw umber, with his yellows, heightened here and there with emerald green, working French ultramarine and white amongst the shadows with a few brisk touches, to give the appearance of intervening air, and also to send them back, when the objects were somewhat remote. These tints laid on a transparent ground of raw umber, driven thinly, or sienna and black, or of Vandyke brown solely, if the trees were near and strongly painted, had a full and rich effect, closely resembling the appearance of the objects. If the foliage were illumined by bright sunlight, his tints were, of course, much lighter and gayer; Naples yellow, touched with emerald green or blue, made lighter by the addition of white, or deeper by

ochre or sienna, came freely into play. A *sidelong touch*, intended to suggest the effect of a breeze blowing across the landscape, is often observed in the foliage of his trees and in the herbage of his foregrounds. To produce this appearance, he held his pencil sidewise, drawing it to right or left according to the direction of the wind. Frequently he used his palette knife to flatten or blur those parts of his foliage painting which he considered too "touchy" (to quote his own term), too precise and mechanical in the manipulation, to suggest leaves ruffled by a breeze. In dark, lowering skies and sombre distances he occasionally mixed indigo with his tints, explaining that, although said to be a fugitive pigment when combined with white lead, he could not obtain the true and desired colour without it. That pigment has hitherto stood very well in his pictures. In compounding his yellows and greens, he sometimes mixed together Naples yellow and ochre. These combinations have not altogether been permanent: a slight change has here and there been observed in these tints; but generally his pictures, as regards colour, have been improved by time, losing little of their original brightness and purity. His usual vehicle was a mixture of copal varnish and turpentine in equal quantities, with the addition of a little linseed oil to retard the drying, and make it flow from the pencil more readily. Those pictures painted with this medium have stood sound and firm, and happily are undisturbed by the operations of the cleaner. David Cox never used a mahlstick when painting, but kept hand and arm

perfectly free, resting one hand on the other when special steadiness was required in the finishing of figures and small details. He liked plenty of pigment in his brush, and never spared the colour-box; his pictures have consequently an appearance the very opposite of thin and washy. When painting from nature, he frequently worked on small milled boards, a couple of which he carried in his tin box, upon slides, so that when wet they were prevented touching, as he commonly had two sketches in progress; one of a morning effect—another which he could proceed with later in the day. He painted rapidly, and soon dashed in his subject, always anxious to secure a striking “effect,” without which he cared little for any subject. His usual price for these small oil sketches, when induced to part with them by friends and admirers, was only £7 10s. each. But if any one turned out a greater success than common in the finishing, he raised the price to £8. It need not be said that the difference was gladly paid. The author once rescued from destruction one of these beautiful sketches, under circumstances rather amusing. In company with David Cox, he was painting in the “big meadow” at Bettws-y-coed, by the side of the river Llugwy. Cox had made choice of a subject looking across the river, which ran in the foreground from left to right of his picture, the craggy summit of one of the local hills, touched by the morning sun, soaring above the tree-tops and thick woods clothing its sides. The subject and effect were both striking, and Cox drew forth canvas and colours,

and soon began to work. His companion also commenced proceedings on another subject close at hand. An hour or so had passed very pleasantly—both pictures, judging from the space of canvas covered, had progressed apparently well—when all of a sudden the author, hearing a great bustle behind him, and looking round to ascertain the cause, perceived that Cox had thrown down palette and brushes, and was proceeding, rag in hand, to rub out the whole of his morning's work. "Don't do that, Mr. Cox," the author shouted out. "What is the matter?" "Matter?" said he. "Why, I can't paint at all to-day. Nature is a great deal too hard for me." And again he prepared to efface what he had been doing. "Stop, stop! don't rub it out. Give it to me. I like it very much; it is very good indeed." "Take it along then," said he. "Can you spare a tube of Indian yellow? I have used all mine. Give me one for the picture." The exchange was made with satisfaction—on one side, at all events. In a few weeks the little sketch was framed, hung up in the author's house at Birmingham, and was greatly admired. Several years afterwards Cox was induced to paint a figure in the foreground of the picture, a fisherman throwing his fly, which gave completeness to a very charming subject.

When painting in oil, Cox frequently had misgivings that his method of working was not in accordance with the accepted practice—he cherished the notion that there were secrets which "the oil men" would not tell him—and he was invariably nervous and

fidgety when any of the painters in oil approached his pictures to examine them closely. He suspected that something was wrong, or at least odd and unusual in the manipulation, or in the laying on of his colours. One incident of this kind illustrates his feeling. An oil-painter was watching him. Said Cox—"Come, what is the matter now? I daresay I have not done it in a proper, artist-like way. My pictures are not intended to be *smelt*! So come here, and tell me how you like the general effect. I have sold the picture, and to Mr. ———. So I suppose it is pretty well—*for me*." The individual addressed replied, "I was looking at the figures, Mr. Cox. How admirably you have painted them! Why, they are in motion, and will walk out of the picture presently." "Will they? I am so glad you like them. What do you think of my trees?" "Why, they are in motion, too. I can almost hear the breeze through the branches!" Cox smiled and answered, "What do you think a lady said to me yesterday? She was looking at this picture, and exclaimed, 'How fond you are of painting *wind*, Mr. Cox! There is always a breeze in *your* pictures! I declare I shall take cold, and must put on my shawl!'" "The highest compliment she could have paid you." "Was it? Well, well! Now let us go down to tea."

CHAPTER XII.

His Position as an Artist—Serious Attack of Illness.

IN the brilliant cluster of eminent water-colour painters who were his contemporaries—Turner, Prout, De Wint, Copley Fielding, Barrett, Cattermole, William Hunt, and others—men with whom he was associated at an early period, and who by their genius have given to the British School of water-colour art its pre-eminence over all the world—David Cox stood conspicuous. The originality of his style, the charming variety of his effects, the picturesque loveliness of his subjects, the novelty of his ideas, the beauty of his colour, the truthfulness to Nature manifest in his works, singled him out, and placed him in the front rank of the artists of his day. He was never so popular, perhaps, as some of his compeers; as, for instance, Copley Fielding, whose works were more highly finished, and whose style, in the opinion of the general public, was more captivating than his. Fielding's drawings in the exhibitions—frequently numerous—were eagerly purchased; sometimes to the great annoyance of Cox, whose finest works were often returned to him unsold. There was a brusque and homely appearance about the latter, frequently a roughness and blottiness in the manipulation, which were by no

means attractive to fastidious persons, who fancied that softness and smoothness of surface were evidences of high artistic excellence; that delicacy of handling and careful elaboration were proofs of consummate skill, and tests of merit. Such persons would pass by the broad, vigorous, suggestive, masculine drawings of David Cox with a shrug, and an entire disbelief in his genius, to secure the more polished and pleasing productions of his neighbour. But Time has reversed the verdict, and set that matter right. "Old Farmer Cox," as he was sometimes called, has taken his proper place among his competitors, second only to Turner, the greatest master of landscape art the world has ever seen, and in some respects not second even to him. Still, in the days when his commanding qualities were imperfectly recognised, Cox had compensation for the general neglect. He always had enthusiastic admirers — and not only admirers, but many who also loved the man as well as his works — among the ablest and most eminent of his brother artists, and the best art connoisseurs of his day, who knew his worth and acknowledged his genius, and this comforted him under many disappointments. The consciousness of this appreciation of his merits by those whose good opinion was "an exceeding great reward," upheld him when smarting under the mortification of receiving back unsold, year after year, many of the finest works he had contributed to the annual exhibitions. The following letter, addressed to his old friend Mr. Roberts, during one of his annual visits to

London, shortly after the opening of the Water-Colour exhibition of 1846, is very interesting, as giving Cox's opinion of the contents of the various exhibitions then open to the public, and as touching on his own indifferent success and position in the Water-Colour Gallery, Pall Mall. This letter is dated thirteen years before his death, but his position was not very materially changed afterwards: he was never so great a favourite with the general public as some other exhibiting members of his society:—

Laurel Cottage, Streatham Place,

Brixton Hill, London,

April 28th, 1846.

MY DEAR FRIEND ROBERTS,—I know you would expect to have heard from me ere this, but you know what a place London is for business and objects of interest. I have been fully occupied in touching upon my drawings and looking at exhibitions, and I am sorry to say none first-rate—that is, neither the B. Institution, British Artists, or the Old Water-colour. And I fear you will think it but an indifferent show. They all appear much the same as for the last ten years. My own drawings are most of them tolerably well hung, and the members say how well they like them. They certainly are very unlike any one else's. For me to say more, or what I think of my own, will be rather more than I wish, and would rather leave it for you and others. *The Times* of yesterday gave me a favourable criticism, and if the rest of the papers do not say less, I shall be very well reported. I rather fear *The Spectator* on Monday next. They generally are rather severe.

My "Forest Scene," and the "Mountain Spring," seem to be most liked by the artists. [These were called in the catalogue, "Outskirts of a Forest," and "The Watering Trough"—both very fine works.] I have at present sold only two—ten-guinea drawings—but as I see my "Forest" looks so well under a glass [Cox usually had his exhibition drawings *framed* in London, and did not see them

“under glass” before he visited the exhibition], I intend purchasing that for my own pleasure, and when I go town to-morrow shall mark it “sold.” . . . Fielding has sent more than forty drawings, some large, and a great number appear to be sold. De Wint has also sold some, but I do not like him so well as in former exhibitions. We have two very promising young men—the two Fripps—one in figure, the other in landscape. Harding, one drawing; Stone, one, small. I have heard that the two latter gents. are about to leave the Water-colour Society to make themselves eligible for the ballot in the R. Academy. I learn that Stone stands a chance. . . . I was not much pleased with either the B. Institution or B. Artists. The picture that I liked, and could look at with most pleasure, is a “Showery Day,” by Dighton. He was a pupil of Müller. I do not know anything about the work or painting of it. Turner’s may be very clever, and I am bound to suppose he cannot do anything very bad, but I could not very well discover the merit of it. L—— I think good, but very little interest—*no mind*. I don’t like Danby. . . . Pyne, at the British Artists’, stands first, but he is lighter and paler than ever. There are not many good pictures there. Anthony is of very great promise, and has one or two, very large and great, and in most respects good. Holland, not so good: but I soon tired, and do not now retain a favourable opinion of the exhibition.

I called at the “Craven” on Saturday, and inquired of Mr. Tapster whether you were arrived, as I expected you and Mr. Birch at the Private View that day. But I was disappointed that neither of you were there. I believe the “Academy” will open on Monday next, and I shall stay in town for the purpose of going on the day of opening, and again on Tuesday; pack up on Wednesday, and return home on Thursday. Wm. Ellis is very anxious to get out of town for Bolton, and this will oblige me to leave on Thursday, as I have a great wish to finish one of my large pictures for Manchester, and it must be finished before I can leave for Yorkshire. I have seen Jutsum, but not Bright—he lives so far off. I have also seen H. Johnson, and met him again yesterday, at the Old Water-Colour Gallery.

So much for gossip about art and artists, and other matters connected with Cox’s visit to London. The

concluding portion of the letter relates to *home* affairs, and shows the kindly feeling of the man with regard to those who were known to or dependent upon him, and the gratitude he felt for small services rendered to him or his. In fact, he could never sufficiently repay any one for kindness shown him. He goes on to say :—

From a letter I received from Ann yesterday, I was very, very sorry to learn so bad an account of poor Ada Birch. I fear our friend must prepare himself to lose her. Her illness, I suppose, prevented him coming to town last week, and unless she is better perhaps will prevent his coming next week.

I beg to give my kindest regards to dear Mrs. Roberts, and thank her for her kindness in going to see my servant Ann, and you also I beg to thank most sincerely for going and making so kind an offer, in case she wanted anything. Love to your two darlings ; and to our friend Birch. David and Hannah beg to send their kindest regards to Mrs. Roberts and yourself ; and with many thanks for all kindness,

I remain, yours very truly,

DAVID COX.

P.S.—Tell our friend Birch I should have written to him, but I cannot be certain whether he would be at home, or at Redleaf. He will therefore please excuse.

To Wm. Roberts, Esq., Metchley, Harborne, Birmingham.

Having regard to Cox's indifferent success in selling the works he contributed to the Water-Colour exhibitions, it is amusing to read in the foregoing letter that on finding his principal drawing, the "Outskirts of a Forest," had not met with a purchaser soon after the opening of the exhibition—that he had sold only "two

small £10 works," whilst other exhibitors had met with a considerable amount of success—"it was his intention (as it looked so well under a glass) to purchase it for his own pleasure, and that on the following day he would mark it 'Sold!'" Poor Cox! He doubtless felt greatly mortified and disappointed that the public did not appreciate his efforts as they did those of some of his brother artists of inferior merit, as he thought; and must have quitted the exhibition many a time disgusted and disheartened. He had been known, shortly before the close of the exhibition, when but few of his drawings had met with a purchaser, and his competitors had sold nearly the whole of their contributions, to order the secretary to affix the ticket "Sold" on all his unsold works; thus, in disdain, withdrawing them from the competition. "My drawings," he says, "are certainly very unlike any one else's." This will perhaps account in some measure for so many being returned on his hands. They were the productions of an original mind, working in a manner peculiar to itself, having no resemblance to that of any other artist, and to be judged of by only the few. He despised mere "portraits of places," as he termed the subjects of some of his brethren, which caught the public taste, and were quickly bought up. It was not to accomplish such work that he had devoted his life and the best energies of his mind to the pursuit of art! But in spite of his many and trying disappointments, year after year; and notwithstanding his mortification at perceiving that his "bits" and small works only were, as a rule, those

for which the public had any regard, whilst his important drawings—those into which he had thrown his whole soul, and to the production of which he had given the best efforts of his genius, with all he knew and felt and could imagine—were looked upon with comparative indifference; he bore up bravely under all, and kept on working in the way that was natural to him—in the way he thought best—achieving many grand successes and producing magnificent works, for which, now that their creator is gone, the world has become grateful.

Among these successes, and in addition to the important drawings before mentioned, may be enumerated several pictures of “Beeston Castle,” in Cheshire (one superb drawing, with a stormy sky, once in the possession of Mr. Henry Bradley, a great admirer of Cox—and another with a luminous rainbow, a most beautiful work), the “Mountain Top” (very grand indeed, one of the artist’s most impressive productions), the “Moors near Bettws-y-coed,” “Gordal Scar,” “Peat-gatherers Returning from the Moors,” “Snowdon from Capel Curig.” The writer was with David Cox when he made the study for this last great work, and will never forget the enthusiasm with which Cox recorded the superb effect he beheld on first catching sight of the mountain. Snowdon was revealed under a cloudy sky, was of the deepest and most intense cobalt blue, and a misty wreath of snowy whiteness hung from near the summit to about half-way down the mountain side. Woods in dark shadow occupied a portion of the middle

distance, enhancing the effect of the whole scene ; and altogether the spectacle was startling in its sublimity. Cox was entranced ; and saying, “ I must try for that ! ” pulled out paper and colours as quickly as possible, and began his drawing. He dashed away at great speed, anxious to secure the effect before a change took place ; and in a short time completed a most powerful sketch. From this he afterwards worked out one of his finest and most suggestive drawings. Well, in this way he laboured on, day after day and year after year, “ toiling, hoping, rejoicing ; ” sometimes, no doubt, cast down and desponding, but not for long. His spirit rose again buoyant and hopeful ; he pursued his accustomed way, and accomplished his allotted tasks nobly and bravely. Time, in his course, beheld the indomitable artist working, with scarce a break, either at his easel indoors or in the fields, jotting down the beautiful features of nature and the effects that so delighted him, good health and a good constitution sustaining him through his labours, until a rather serious attack of bronchitis in the spring of the year 1853 compelled him for several weeks to lay down palette and colours and give himself the requisite nursing and rest. He had scarcely recovered from this attack when, in the month of June following, he was seized with an illness of a much more alarming character. On going into his garden for the purpose of cutting asparagus for dinner, the position of stooping over the bed for some little time brought on a determination of blood to the head, which caused him to fall to the ground in an almost senseless condition.

He was discovered lying there by his servant Mercy, who was wondering what had become of her dear master, as he did not return to the house, and she, in the utmost terror, raised an alarm which speedily brought some one to her assistance. Mrs. Fowler at the time was on a visit to her parents at Hereford, and knew nothing of what had happened, but a messenger was despatched to the residence of Mr. Roberts, whose nephew, being fortunately at home, posted off to Birmingham, and soon brought back to the assistance of Mr. Cox his usual medical adviser. All proper remedies were employed, and the old man was ere long restored to his former consciousness. The attack had produced a slight congestion of the brain, and for a time he was very ill and completely disabled, but, with skilful treatment and good nursing, he eventually rallied, so as to be able to go about the house and garden, and to take short walks occasionally, leaning on the arm of some member of his family or of a domestic. In a few weeks he felt himself strong enough to do a little out-of-door sketching, and to sit at his easel to paint in oil. Grateful for the kind services rendered to him by his friend Roberts' nephew in fetching the doctor from town at the time of his attack, the first picture he was able to paint was presented to that gentleman as a mark of his appreciation of the act. He cheered up considerably in a few weeks, and was happy at being able to get to work again, but he was never the same man after this illness. His sight was injured, and his memory impaired, particularly as regards the names of persons and places, of dates, and other

matters. It is a fact that sometimes he even forgot his own name, and the name of the person on whom he was going to make a call, and was compelled to return home without accomplishing the purpose of his visit. He one day went to the house of a most respected friend, Mr. Hyla Betts, with a beautiful water-colour drawing, which he wished to present to the lady of the house as a remembrance; but when the servant answered his knock at the door he was unable to inform her who he was, or whom he wanted to see. Luckily there was some one within hearing who recognised his voice, and called him by name. This affliction did not (as has been said) prevent his painting occasionally, and he produced a number of works, usually of small size, both in oil and water, after the attack; but although many of them exhibited evidences of his former genius, they were feeble in drawing, often inharmonious in colour, and precision of touch and freedom of handling were conspicuously absent. It is to be regretted that he allowed some of these inferior works to go forth into the world; but his admirers were eager to possess something from his hand, whatever might be its quality; and doubtless his impaired vision, which was the chief cause of the inferiority of these, his latest productions, rendered him unaware of their deficiencies. It is true that he sent to the exhibitions, drawings of great excellence and considerable importance between the period of this illness in 1853 and the time of his death in 1859; but the majority, if not all of them, must have been earlier works, looked out from his large collection of sketches and studies, and

requiring but little finish to fit them for the purpose. It is probable that they were dated when the last touches were added to them; and this will account for some of them possessing the finest qualities of his best time. Occasionally, when feeling in better health and spirits, he dashed off something manifesting the old characteristics in conception, colour, and treatment; but, speaking generally, the works of this final period may readily be distinguished from those of his best day by feeble drawing, an absence of freedom in the manipulation—particularly in his oil pictures—great opaqueness of colour in the latter, and an uncertain touch. So soon as Cox began to feel strong enough after this alarming attack—in about a couple of months—he determined to pay another visit to the dear old spot, Bettws. He took with him one of his granddaughters, his housekeeper, Mrs. Fowler, and Mr. George Priest, a Birmingham frame-maker, for company, and to see that he was properly cared for. The “Royal Oak” having become too noisy for him, the party took up their quarters at the farmhouse close by. For three years afterwards Cox continued his periodical visits to Bettws, until he could no longer undertake the journey, his last sojourn there being in the autumn of 1856. On all these occasions he was accompanied by friends, or members of his family, and for the sake of undisturbed peace and quietness, he lodged at the old Farm. For a short time he went on with his out-door work, as he was wont to do, though not with the old energy and persistence; his strength was gradually deserting him, and on each recurring visit

he found himself more feeble than before. He was content to stroll about short distances, attended by those who accompanied him from home, making “bits” and “outlines” and memoranda of “effects” that pleased him; chatting with passers-by, and gazing with all the delight of his better days on the beautiful scenes and objects surrounding him on every side. We may conceive him on one of those golden evenings, when the sun was sinking behind the western hills, contemplating the glorious spectacle with tearful eyes, at the thought that *his* sun was setting too, and in brief space would be seen no more by those on earth!—lost through the long night of ages to come!

CHAPTER XIII.

1855.

Visit to Edinburgh—His Portrait Painted by Sir J. W. Gordon, R.A.—Presentation of it at Metchley Abbey, Harborne—Engraved by S. Bellin—Bust by Peter Hollins (Posthumous).

AT the commencement of the summer of 1855, it was suggested by one of the many Birmingham friends and admirers of David Cox that a portrait of him should be painted by some artist of eminence, with a view to its ultimately being placed in some public gallery in his native town. This proposal was warmly taken up; meetings were held; a committee was formed to carry out the project; a sufficient sum was quickly collected; and it was decided to give the commission to Sir John Watson Gordon, R.A. and P.R.S.A. But here a difficulty arose, of no slight magnitude. Sir John Watson Gordon was far advanced in years, and unable to visit Birmingham for the purpose of painting the picture; and poor Cox himself was not only old, but very feeble and infirm. Cox's medical advisers were consulted, and were of opinion that there would be no danger in his travelling to Edinburgh by easy stages; and he was recommended to take that course. The length of the journey, and apprehended excitement consequent upon it, terrified him greatly, and for some time he declined to adopt the advice of his friends. Sir Watson Gordon

also was firm in his determination not to travel to Birmingham, although much gratified by having had the commission placed in his hands. After much persuasion, Cox at length consented to run the risk of a journey to Edinburgh; and accordingly, in the month of August of that year, accompanied by his son and by the writer of this Memoir, he started for Scotland. It was decided to take a couple of days to perform the journey, and, therefore, the party slept the first night at Carlisle. An amusing incident occurred at that place. After breakfast on the morning following their arrival, the party sallied forth to look about the city, and see the memorable old castle, famous in the Border wars between Scotland and her Southern neighbour. Cox was much struck with the grandeur of the castle-keep, which stood erect, massive, large, and strong, and was desirous of making a sketch of it. The party accordingly ascended to the ramparts, and Cox took his position, and commenced a drawing in colours of the fine old keep, whilst a sentry was patrolling to and fro on the ramparts beside him, interested in what was going on. Guns, it was remarked, were in position, pointing downwards through the embrasures, in the direction of the Border-land, to scare away a possible enemy. The venerable artist had not been long at work, and was making good progress with an effective sketch, when an official came up on to the ramparts, and ordered him to desist. "Why so?" inquired the old man. "You are making a drawing of one of Her Majesty's fortresses in time of war," replied the official, "and must give over

instantly." (The Russian War was at that time being fought out in the *Crimea*—some distance away, certainly!) The important official turned on his heel; and Cox, disgusted, closed his sketch-book at once, and prepared to leave the castle. When the Jack-in-office had departed (he was keeper of the ordnance, or something of that sort), the sentry walked up to Cox, and said, "Why didn't you give him half-a-crown?—*that* was what he wanted." "The humbug!" muttered Cox to himself; "I would not have given him a penny!" and marched away from the place in high dudgeon. Walking round the Castle walls, a good view of the keep was, however, obtained from a spot near the river Eden, and there an effective sketch was made—beyond the authority of the ordnance official—from which Cox afterwards executed a picture in oil.

On the evening of that day the little party reached Edinburgh, and took up their quarters for a short time at the "Royal Hotel," in Princes Street. It was getting dusk when they arrived, and as they sat looking from the coffee-room window across to the "Old Town" opposite, lights sprang up in innumerable windows, storey above storey, in the lofty houses towering along the ridge which faced them, and the effect was most interesting and novel, suggesting to the strangers an illumination on the occasion of some important event. Cox sat and gazed, delighted, for a considerable time. He was also much struck, on the following morning, with the grand picturesque appearance of the old Castle, on its soaring rock, touched as it was by the beams of

the rising sun. The effect was remarkably fine, and Cox wished for his painting-materials, and a convenient spot from which to make a memorandum of so striking a subject. During their stay they took a delightful drive round Arthur's Seat ; visited Calton Hill ; strolled to Holyrood Palace ; about the streets and wynds and through some of the closes of the Old Town—neither very sweet nor clean, but particularly interesting, and affording many fine subjects for a painter of the quaint and picturesque. With all they saw Cox was greatly delighted, and thought “Auld Reekie” a city full of charms.

On the next morning after their arrival Cox and his companions visited Sir John Gordon at his rooms in George Street. He received them very cordially, shaking Cox warmly by the hand, and saying, in a broad Scottish accent, “Welcome to Scotland, Maister Corks !” Everything was ready for the first sitting ; the rostrum, with a chair (once the property of David Wilkie) fixed upon it, was placed in position ; close beside it stood the easel, with a virgin canvas waiting for the first strokes of the pencil, and soon the work was commenced. Although a good deal broken in constitution, Cox carried in his complexion much ruddy, healthy colour, and looked a splendid subject for a portrait—in fact, Sir John said he had not had a finer subject since he painted Sir Walter Scott, whom Cox, at that time, much resembled. The writer watched the progress of this portrait with great interest. It was executed in a very easy, straightforward manner.

The various tints were laid on the canvas side by side, without being blended, very much like mosaic; and it began to be a likeness, striking and unmistakable, almost from the first touch. It was a great pleasure to observe the portrait growing, as it were, stroke by stroke, into a second David Cox, so close a resemblance it bore to the original, who was sitting beside it. With regard to the manner of painting, the writer remarked to the artist, "You do not appear to use a *softener* to blend your tints, Sir John." "No," said he; "if you wish to make flesh look like leather, use a softener!" The picture progressed with unerring precision; each sitting carried on the work with satisfaction to all. On one occasion poor Cox was very weary, and seemed to be dropping off into a doze, when the painter, in his broad Scottish accent, exclaimed, "Wake up, noo, Maister Corks! I am going to do your expression." Poor Cox, just on the borders of sleep, could not comprehend what was said to him, and, turning to his son, asked, "What does he say, David?" In five sittings, on as many consecutive days, all that was necessary to be done from the life was accomplished. The likeness was a great success.

The Edinburgh artists would have been glad could they have given their eminent brother painter a public reception, but some of them were from home at that time, and Cox's health would not have permitted him to gratify their desire. Calls were made on Thomas Faed, R.A., Mr. D. O. Hill, secretary of the Scottish Academy, and one or two others; and an invitation to

dine with Sir John Gordon at his residence near New-haven was accepted. The host being a bachelor, his sister, Miss Watson, received his guests, and Mr. Watson, a relative of Sir John, was of the party. The dining-room contained a number of Sir John's works, mostly figure and subject pictures, which it was conjectured had been exhibited and had not sold. The artist had commenced his career by painting pictures of this description, but want of success compelled him to turn his attention to portraiture. And even as a portrait painter, notwithstanding his great ability, it was long before he became eminent in Scotland, his own countrymen (as he informed his guests) thinking little of his skill until after he had been elected into the Royal Academy of England ! After dinner the party were shown over Sir John's workshop, at the bottom of his garden, containing a carpenter's bench, and all the requisite tools for making stretchers for his pictures. His canvases were also prepared on the premises—Mr. Watson being his assistant in the work. It may be mentioned here that it was not canvas, as generally used, on which Sir John painted, but Scotch sheeting, which he preferred. The portrait of David Cox was painted on this material.

When this portrait was in progress, the artist was also engaged on the picture of another sitter, who was Custodian of the "Register of Marriages," belonging to one of the old Edinburgh churches, and who wished this book to be introduced into his picture. This volume was shown to Cox and his friends by Sir

John; and it may be interesting to some to know that in it they read—still legible—the register of the marriage of Mary Queen of Scots with Darnley!

At the expiration of a week, Cox's portrait having been nearly finished, the little party bade adieu to Scotland, and returned on their homeward journey, staying a short time, to rest, at the pretty cottage of their friend Mr. R. G. Reeves, at Bolton-le-Sands. The portrait was exhibited the following season at the Royal Academy in London, where it excited much attention, and was afterwards engraved in mezzotint, in the finest manner, by Samuel Bellin, who, from his admiration of Cox, charged a merely nominal sum for his work; and a copy of the print was presented to each subscriber to the picture.

The ceremony of the presentation of the portrait to David Cox took place on Monday, 19th of November, 1855. Mr. Charles Birch, chairman of the Portrait Committee, and the artist's old and particular friend, issued invitations to a number of the subscribers, and others interested in the event, to assemble at his residence, Metchley Abbey, Harborne, to witness the proceedings. A large party met together in the Picture Gallery of the Abbey to do honour to Cox, and justice to the good things which their host had placed on his hospitable board. Around the walls hung many works of art of high character by the most eminent painters of the day—Turner, and Leslie, and Etty, and Constable, and many others, including charming pictures by Cox himself, of whose genius Mr. Birch was one of the

earliest and most devoted among many worshippers. The portrait, surmounted with festoons of laurel, was placed at the bottom of the room ; and a pleasant sight it was to behold the long rows of guests assembled to pay honour to their old friend, who was seated at the right hand of Mr. Birch, and who, though gratified at this recognition of his merits, was nevertheless in a state of nervous trepidation, wondering how he should get through the trying ordeal before him. So soon as the table was cleared, the host rose to make a formal presentation of the portrait to his distinguished guest. This he did with admirable taste and feeling, alluding to Cox's early struggles for fame, the high position he had now attained, and his many excellent qualities as a man, rendering him in every way worthy of the honour about to be conferred. The honorary secretary, Mr. John Jaffray, then read an address to Mr. Cox, which he had written for the purpose, and which was afterwards prefixed to a small volume containing the autographs of upwards of a hundred of the subscribers, and which was also presented to Cox :—

TO MR. DAVID COX.

DEAR SIR,—Several old friends, who for many years have enjoyed the pleasure of intimate communion with you, and a few others who only know you by your professional works, having a desire to express to you their admiration of your genius and their respect for your private character, have entered into a subscription, the result of which is the portrait now presented to you in the names of the subscribers.

In thus expressing their feelings they were also influenced by the desire of preserving in your native town a memorial of one who already holds a high place in the estimation of all who can distinguish between the meretricious and true in art, and who will

yet be held in higher repute as an able teacher in a genial, manly school of landscape-painting. For, disregarding the mere outward prettiness of Nature, you seized the true essence of her grandeur, and the spirit of her beauty, and became her faithful and therefore her famous exponent.

It has been said of those who patiently and with a single mind love Virtue for her own sake, that the very act of self-denial is happiness. The same may be said of the patient, modest, unselfish student of Nature. To him she reveals her secrets and lays bare her beauty ; the very act of self-sacrifice is the passport to fame.

Such we believe to be the spirit in which you entered upon and pursued your half-century of study. Beginning in a humble way, neither aided by patronage, nor buoyed up by applause, you have won a high place amongst contemporary artists, have made your name famous in many lands, and, better still, have surrounded your declining years with troops of friends who not only admire your genius, but reverence and love you. To the man as well as to the artist we offer this mark of respect.

Like many who have climbed to the highest pinnacles of fame, you tasted adversity. In the two extremes you have shown the same high qualities of mind ; bearing obscurity with manly fortitude, and, what is still more difficult, acquiring fame without losing the simplicity of your character. These are rare qualities always, very rare in an age of showy accomplishment and restless action, and by preserving in some public building in your native town this record of you—a record as true and unaffected as the man it represents—we seek to perpetuate the example of your private virtues as well as the remembrance of your professional fame.

Accept then, dear sir, this expression of the admiration and love of your friends ; and they are sure that you will value the gift more highly as being the work of an artist kindred to yourself in spirit, who in a different walk of art has won an honourable reputation, and who by this portrait has added another to the list of his professional successes.

We fervently hope that you may long be spared to wear the laurels you have so well won, to give more evidence of the unabated freshness of your thoughts and the vigour of your pencil, and to enjoy the serene repose of a virtuous and honoured old age.

Birmingham, November 19th, 1855.

Poor Cox, broken down in health as he was, and very feeble, was unable to respond to this address, or to return thanks in words. This duty was discharged by deputy; and on the conclusion of the few words uttered in his behalf by his friend and medical adviser, Dr. Bell Fletcher, he rose from his seat, and (all he *could* do) approved what had been said with a silent bow. Shortly afterwards he wished his friends good night—the hour growing late, for him—and went home, tenderly attended by his old friend and fellow-artist, Mr. C. W. Radclyffe, to partake of his simple supper of bread and milk.

Until the death of David Cox, this portrait hung in his sitting-room—the counterpart of himself. After his death it was handed over, for safe keeping, to the Birmingham and Midland Institute; and it is now adorning the Fine Art Gallery belonging to the town. The engraved plate, after the requisite number of impressions had been taken from it, was given to Mr. Cox, to be bequeathed to his son, who now possesses it. A memorial bust, in marble, executed by Mr. Peter Hollins, of Birmingham, was also subscribed for some time after the death of Cox, and is an excellent likeness of the old man in his last days. This is likewise placed in the town gallery. In 1874, a few loving friends subscribed a sum of money to place a memorial window in the old church at Harborne, where the painter worshipped.

CHAPTER XIV.

1858—9.

Last Visit to London, and to Bettws-y-coed—Illness and Death—Funeral in Harborne Churchyard—Memorial Window in the Church.

It has already been mentioned that when the portrait painted by Sir J. W. Gordon came from the hands of the engraver, it was delivered to Cox, to be retained by him during his life, agreeably to the decision of the committee; afterwards to be permanently placed in a public institution in Birmingham. Cox was, of course, well pleased to have it in his possession, and to see it hanging in his sitting-room as long as he could take care of it; but he felt nevertheless that he was only a trustee for others, who were soon to take charge of it, and that the picture was, after all, not his own. He would have been better satisfied if it had been given to him to deal with as he thought fit; in that case it would undoubtedly have been bequeathed to his son. He often said to his friends, "Oh, I wish David could have had this portrait!" But he was determined that his son *should* have a portrait of him, and that by an artist eminent in his profession. Accordingly, on visiting London, in the summer of 1856—the year following that in which the Gordon portrait was painted—he arranged to sit to Mr. Boxall, whose portraits were much admired, and who was delighted to

have the opportunity of painting so distinguished an artist as David Cox. This picture, when finished, was presented to Mr. David Cox, jun., who treasures it with affectionate care. It has not been considered so good a likeness of the old man as the portrait by Gordon. There is in the expression a suddenly-awakened spasm of intelligence, which is not happy, and is unlike the usual expression seen on the face of Cox, which was always intelligent, sometimes suggesting an acute penetration, but never a waking-up of the intellect in a sudden and spasmodic manner. Mr. Boxall no doubt was anxious to make his sitter look like the man of genius that he was, but in the attempt he rather forced the expression.

The winter of 1855 and the spring-time of 1856 came and went and still found David Cox at work, producing both pictures in oil and water-colour drawings of varying excellence, some of them exhibiting qualities of a high order, but many showing proofs of declining powers and physical weakness. He contributed a number of works, as usual, to the exhibition of his society, and surprised his friends, who knew of his failing health, by the display of flashes of genius manifest in productions which, they feared, would be his last. The hand of the old veteran was evidently trembling and unsteady, but his spirit retained much of its fire, and its conceptions were still marked by poetry and beauty, as in days gone by.

On the approach of the autumn of 1856, after his return from London, where he went to sit to Mr. Boxall,

and to see the exhibitions, Cox began to meditate another visit to his dear Bettws-y-coed, longing for a fond, perhaps farewell look at the favourite spot. Although dreading the fatigue of the journey, he plucked up courage, and started for Wales and his beloved haunts; glad to find himself once again taking up his quarters at the old farm-house. This was his last visit to Bettws. He was too feeble to do more than make a few slight sketches, and to saunter about in the beautiful scenery, inhaling with keen relish the pure mountain air. He returned to Harborne the better for his trip, but by no means restored to his former state of health. Nevertheless, he set to work, as usual, and began to get ready drawings for the ensuing exhibition. During the winter he was not so well; his feebleness increased; his sight was not so good, and sometimes it failed so much that he could hardly tell when his pencil touched the paper. This made his work appear blurred and the manipulation quite wanting in precision and firmness. The drawing of his figures, or of any other definite objects, was loose and inaccurate. Feebleness was manifest in all he did, and he felt that he should not long be able to paint, even for occupation and amusement. Still he continued to make efforts, and took up some of his old sketches to finish for the exhibition of 1857. The author remembers well the "council" held on this occasion, to discuss what subjects should be determined on. The fine sketch of "Gordal Scar" had long remained in Cox's portfolio in the state he left it in when it was first made; every one

admired it; Cox himself had always thought well of it; but still he had never completed or used it. But now he was persuaded to take the sketch up and finish it, for the coming exhibition, and it was one of his most important contributions of that year. His final visit to London, to see his son, and take a look at the Royal Academy and Water-Colour exhibitions, was made at the beginning of the summer of 1857. Whilst there he was seized with an illness which compelled him to seek medical assistance, but he recovered sufficiently in a short time to be able to return home, and ere long set to work again with renewed spirit. He even meditated another journey into Wales, but the weather proving unfavourable, he gave up the idea, consoling himself for the disappointment by buckling to work with a spurt of energy that carried him through the labour of producing several oil pictures, and a number of drawings for the exhibition of 1858. These latter contributions to the Pall Mall Gallery were much admired, but of course they were not entirely the productions of his last days. Probably the finishing touches only were given to them during the few preceding months.

Cox did not stir from home throughout the year 1858, except for short walks in the neighbourhood of Harborne, or an occasional stroll into Birmingham to see friends, or do little marketings for the sake of doing something. Towards Christmas he was again very unwell. He had taken a severe cold, and it was painfully apparent to his friends and those about him that the end of his life was fast approaching. He daily

became more feeble and infirm, and often had extreme difficulty in holding up until bedtime. He complained frequently of pain in his limbs, and towards ten o'clock in the evening would say, "Oh, my poor legs! how they do ache! I should like to go to bed." It was then time for those who had called to see him to take their departure, which they usually did forthwith, sorry to see their old friend so distressed. But he never showed displeasure if they lingered a few moments to say a parting word after the hint had been given. His kindness of heart did not desert him, although weary and worn out. He was to the last a gentleman.

The year 1859 opened with gloom for Cox and for his household. His illness increased in severity, and through the entire month of January his life was in danger. But again he recovered, and was able in a few weeks to come down-stairs, and resume his customary occupation. Again he completed a number of drawings for the exhibition of that year, but, sad to say, they were the last he was ever to send. He caught another cold soon after he had dispatched them to London, which left him weaker than before, and although for a short time he became better, still the improvement did not last long. At the beginning of June, he was once more prostrate. Before taking to his bed, and on retiring one evening earlier than usual, quite worn out with pain and weariness, he seems to have had a presentiment that his end was at hand, for on looking round his old sitting-room, as he went out at the door, he said, mournfully, "Good-bye, pictures!" He never

saw them again. In a few days he became decidedly worse, and on the 7th of the month, in the 77th year of his age, he expired quite tranquilly, in the presence of his son and the sorrowing members of his household. His last words were, "God bless you all!"

On the 14th of June, seven days after his death, a large number of friends and neighbours assembled at and near Greenfield House, to follow the great artist to his grave in Harborne Churchyard. A deep gloom seemed to overshadow all present. The day was fine, but the sun had lost its cheering influence, and shone in vain. It could not smile away the sadness that was in every heart. Friends — attached friends — who had often visited at that house, and always with delight, felt that they had entered it for the last time; and poor neighbours, who stood about the gate and in the road, silent but sorrowing spectators of the scene, knew that death had taken from them one who had always been kind to them in affliction, and helpful in their needs. As the melancholy procession passed along on its way to the grave, many a sigh was heaved, and many an apron was lifted to the eyes, in the cottage-homes of those who for years had known and respected their old neighbour and friend David Cox.

The gentlemen who bore up the pall were the deceased's intimate friends, one or two among his oldest and most attached associates — Messrs. Roberts and Birch, Darby and Ellis, Bullock and Betts, Hollingsworth, and the author of this Memoir. Mr. Frederick Tayler, President of the Old Water-Colour Society,

deputed to represent that body, and Mr. Peter Hollins, Vice-President of the Birmingham Society of Artists, with many of its members, besides a large gathering of friends and admirers of David Cox, followed in procession to the grave. Mrs. Cox had been buried in Harborne Churchyard fourteen years before, and in the same grave were reverently and lovingly laid the remains of him who now was borne to mingle his dust with hers. They sleep together under the branches of a noble spreading tree, that flecks the grey stone with shade, and keeps the bordering greensward fresh and fair.

That David Cox, as a man, was esteemed and beloved by all who knew him intimately, the surviving friends who still mourn his loss can abundantly testify. He was kind to such as stood in need of assistance, especially to those who dwelt in his immediate neighbourhood. He was very kind to his servants, and in every way considerate of their comfort; and, in return, they were at all times ready to wait on him hand and foot. He gave them many little drawings as keepsakes, which they treasured long, as memorials of their dear old master. To Ann Fowler, once his servant, but latterly his housekeeper, who had lived with him from a girl, he bequeathed the sum of £500, and left her in the care of his son, to be watched over by him in her old age. To all his friends he was especially kind; was ever delighted to see them under his roof, to drink tea with him when he had finished work for the day, or to partake of a simple supper. He made many presents of drawings to them, which were highly

valued, alike for their merit and their association. His young lady friends, in particular, shared his bounty to a large extent, their scrap-books being enriched by frequent contributions from his pencil. In fact, he appears to have scattered these gifts broadcast among such as were kind to him, and for whom he entertained feelings of affectionate regard. To one or two old friends he bequeathed drawings of importance and value. To the curate of Harborne Church, who had been very attentive to Mrs. Cox in her last illness, he presented a beautiful drawing of Bolton Abbey. It is now the property of Mr. George Graham, of Birmingham. To his medical attendants, who frequently visited him when unwell, and to whom he felt grateful for relief afforded him, he gave a number of his productions, which he insisted on their accepting. To all his artist friends he was very communicative and very kind. He had no professional secrets, no professional jealousy, and gladly told them all he knew. He gave them valuable advice as to the treatment of their works in hand, and showed them how to mix their tints, or helped them over a difficult part. He has been known, when at Bettws, to half-complete a picture by some amateur or young artist who could not master the difficulties of his task. Many and warm were the words of encouragement he gave to such as did well. "Paint away!" he has said. "Stick to it! you'll do! How nicely you have painted those trees! How did you make the colour? *I* could not have painted them so well!" And he has praised the

young artist in no measured terms to all he encountered. By very many kind acts and words of a similar description did David Cox win the esteem and affection of brother artists with whom he came in contact. Falling in, one day, at Bettws, with a young aspirant for fame who was but slightly known to him, and who appeared to have been working most industriously, and was regretting that he was compelled to return home sooner than he wished, it occurred to Cox that it might be owing to the young man's means falling short that he was obliged to leave forthwith. Accordingly an opportunity was found for ascertaining the fact, and Cox intimated that if such were the case he should be happy to advance a little money, to enable one who had worked so well to make a few more sketches from nature. Whether the kind offer was accepted the author knows not; but doubtless David Cox's consideration and kindly feeling left on the young artist's mind an impression that was not readily effaced; and should he be living now, and have attained to eminence in his profession, he will not fail to cherish pleasant recollections of the veteran "brother of the brush," who stepped forward to aid him at the early period of his career. To an artist friend who wished to buy one of his small pictures, and who tendered the usual price for a work of the size, he insisted on returning a sovereign, saying, "the sum was too much for so small a picture." On the friend objecting to receive the money, Cox thrust it forcibly into his waistcoat pocket, saying, "If *you* are too proud to take

it for yourself, give it to your little son as a fairing-present from me [it was then fair-time in Birmingham], and tell him to go and see the wild-beast show, and I hope he will enjoy it." To the poor people who resided near him (as has been said) he was exceedingly kind, particularly if they were sick or out of employment, and frequently gave them benefactions to relieve their necessities. The minister of his church has told me that when visiting the sick poor of the parish he has often discovered, to his surprise, that Mr. Cox had preceded him, and had left behind tokens of commiseration and sympathy much needed and gratefully received. No wonder that he was endeared to many, and that his death was felt to be a great misfortune by all who knew him.

David Cox, although not what some would term an "eminently pious" man, was a devout Churchman, and always evinced great respect for religious observances, and, if the weather were not too unfavourable, made it a point of duty to attend church on the Sabbath, at home or abroad. When at Bettws, if the service were in Welsh (as was sometimes the case), he would bespeak a vehicle to take him to Llanrwst, a distance of four miles; and the author has more than once accompanied him there. On those occasions he was grave and serious, and appeared to have laid aside for the day all light thoughts and professional considerations. He never, whilst the author was acquainted with him, painted on Sundays, as some artists are in the habit of doing; but, if confined to the house by indisposition or

bad weather, devoted some portion of the day to reading the Prayer-book and the Bible. The writer used frequently to visit him on Sunday evenings, during the last years of his life; and these visits were looked for as a customary thing, unless the weather were too bad for a walk. In that case, and if he thought no friends were likely to drop in, he would take down the large Bible, and devote the evening to a serious, attentive perusal of its contents. Occasionally the well-known knock at the door has disturbed him in the midst of his reading, when the spectacles were put down, and the Bible laid aside, with a marker carefully placed between the leaves, to show him where he had left off. Nearly every Sunday morning when at home, as regularly as the day came round, his venerable grey head might have been seen above the top of his pew in Harborne Church, devoutly bent in prayer, or gazing attentively at the preacher, whose words imparted comfort and consolation. Not many of the worshippers who beheld him in his accustomed place looked upon him as the man of genius, whose name and fame in a few short years would be blazoned from end to end of the land of his birth. He was familiar to them only as homely, unpretending Mr. Cox, their much-respected friend and neighbour, who earned his living by painting pictures which some people said were not destitute of merit. The day of his renown was not there nor then; nor did his coming in or going out attract unusual notice. He went his way between the graves of the old churchyard, among which

he was one day to rest, as an ordinary member of the congregation, and no one dreamt of looking after him to see what manner of man he was. He is seen no more in the old church; his place has long since been occupied by another; but, although departed, he is not forgotten. The Sabbath sun shines in through a beautiful window, which loving friends have erected there as a memorial of him; and when the eyes of those assembled within the sacred temple gaze upon its harmonious colours and fine design, the old man who was once their fellow-worshipper is recalled to memory. The following description of this window is extracted from *The Birmingham Daily Post* of April 1st, 1874:—

It was a happy thought which prompted the placing of a stained glass window in the parish church of Harborne, as a memorial to the genius of our great water-colour painter, David Cox. Passing the later years of his life at Harborne, and that, too, in close proximity to the old church, this artist has simply lifted this neighbourhood out of the dull level of villa suburbanism; and for this alone even Harborne should show some gratitude. The good intentions of those who pleasingly recognised this claim have been greatly promoted by Messrs. Hardman and Co., of this town, to whom the commission to execute the memorial window was entrusted. The strong love of nature, the looking through nature up to nature's God, is the simple object portrayed, and how successfully this has been done a mere glance at the window, now completed, fully proves. The centre of the window contains within a circle, which is banded in its upper part by a rainbow, the scene of the Creation, in which Adam views the marvellous works of nature in the infinite varieties of life revealed to him. In the upper half of the window appear two vesica-shaped spaces, in which "Spring" and "Summer" are respectively painted, the former flinging blossoms to the earth, whilst the latter is seated amidst a luxuriant growth of flowers. Corresponding to these are "Autumn," with her wreath of ripe corn and fruits, and "Winter,"

whose darkly-wrapped figure stands well out against the bare branches and snow-mantled ground. Bands, which surround and interlace the whole of the design, bear texts from the Psalms, bearing upon the subject of the glory of God, as exemplified in the works of nature. It is scarcely too much to say that this window is one of the most successful works which Messrs. Hardman have executed. To Mr. John Powell, who has in this paid a tribute to the genius of a great artist, the design of the memorial is due.

Beneath the window is the following inscription:—

To the Glory of God, and in Memory of David Cox, Artist,
this Window was erected by a few Friends, A.D. 1874.

CHAPTER XV.

Cox's Characteristics as a Man—Interior of His House—Dress and Appearance.

THE simplicity of the life and character of David Cox was as remarkable as anything by which he was distinguished. There was nothing about him that might be called showy, in person, manner, or surroundings. In all his ways he was artless and simple as a child. In person he was ever scrupulously clean and neat ; in dress plain and unpretending. When at home he generally wore a grey suit, resembling his sketching-costume ; and when he went out, to dine with a friend, or to make calls in town, he put on a black frock-coat, black velvet waistcoat (except in the height of summer, when he wore a light and thinner one), and grey trousers ; it is this dress which figures in the portrait of him by Sir J. W. Gordon. He invariably wore shoes, for ease and comfort, during the time the author was acquainted with him. His house was plainly furnished. In his usual sitting-room were a carved oak sideboard and a sofa, but nothing luxurious or meant for display. There were no lounging-chairs, or anything to suggest effeminacy, or a love of present ease and indulgence. To the day of his death he never would have any but cane-seated chairs, such as are used in bedrooms, but rarely in living apartments ; and these were

not cushioned, and were felt by his friends to be rather hard and rigid, especially after a long walk. There has been a story told of some person—a dealer in antique furniture, known to Cox—who calling one day upon him, affected to be much shocked at the uncomfortable character of these chairs, and proposed to lend for his use half a dozen old carved chairs, which he described as being artistic, and very fine things of their kind, having soft crimson velvet cushions, very elegant to look at, and particularly comfortable for an elderly person to sit or recline in. The manner in which the loan is said to have been proposed was rather calculated to shake the nerves and disturb the serenity of Cox. “Dear me!” said this visitor, “how uncomfortable it must be for you to sit always on these hard cane-seated chairs! I feel quite sorry for you. Do allow me to lend you some fine old carved chairs—very fine chairs indeed—at least two hundred years old! They have a coat-of-arms at the backs beautifully carved, and must have belonged to one of the old nobility. They would be quite in character in an artist’s room; you would find them extremely comfortable; and I would charge you nothing for the use of them. You should keep them as long as you live. Then,” after a pause, and with a smile intended to be insinuating, “I suppose after your death there will be a sale here, Mr. Cox, and then my chairs, from having been in the possession of such an eminent artist, will sell for three times as much as they would now. Let me send them up at once.” “No, thank you, sir,” replied Cox. “I am very much obliged,

but cannot avail myself of your kind offer. I am accustomed to my own chairs, and should not feel so comfortable in any other. Besides, it would make me quite wretched, when I am sitting alone in the gloom of the evening, to look round on your dark funereal chairs, upon which, for aught I know to the contrary, hundreds of dead people may have sat from first to last, and think they are all anxiously waiting for my death to become three times as valuable as they are now! No, thank you! I could not endure the thought! I won't discard my old chairs. They will do quite well enough for me." So the ingenious furniture-dealer departed, baffled in a fine stroke of business.

The sitting-room walls were adorned with a few pictures in oil, chiefly Cox's own works, in an unfinished state; but over the sofa hung a masterly sketch by Müller, for which Cox had great admiration, and for which he had given in exchange one of the largest and best of his own works in oil, "The Vale of Clwyd," exhibited in the Liverpool Academy at 80 guineas, but returned to the artist unsold. This is now the property of a London collector, Mr. de Murietta, who paid 2,000 guineas for it. Over the sideboard hung for some time, until it was finished and sold, a most brilliant and effective sketch in oil of Bettws Church. The transparent, lovely colour, and free, spirited handling of this work were most charming. It ought never to have been touched again; but an old esteemed friend of Cox desired the artist to "finish" it for him, and agreed to pay £100 for it when completed. This was done

shortly before Cox's death ; but much of the transparency and beautiful colour of the work disappeared in the process of finishing, and the masterly manipulation had given place to the feeble, unsteady, halting touch of the painter's latter days. The author will never forget his feeling of dismay when he first caught sight of the "finished" work. But Cox received £100 for the completed picture, to him a large and tempting price, the largest ever paid him for any one production. In a corner of the room, near the door, and looking like a duplicate David Cox, hung, during the last years of his life, the portrait by Sir Watson Gordon. It was so like the man that a stranger might almost have been excused for mistaking it, at first sight, when entering the room, for the artist himself. These were the chief decorations of the parlour in which Cox usually sat ; a few pictures of lesser consequence hanging beside and between them. A fine large sketch of Conway Bay and Castle took the place of the Bettws Church picture, when the latter was removed. In the small room on the opposite side of the entrance hall, called the breakfast room, hung a large early drawing of Cader Idris, somewhat hard and precise, but nevertheless a fine work. This Cox bequeathed to his old friend and executor, Mr. W. L. Ellis. Facing this drawing was a full-length, life-size portrait of a Persian prince, said to have been painted by Briggs, R.A. It was a well-executed picture, good in colour, and very effective. Cox liked it much. Besides these there were several smaller works of merit, by Müller, Blacklock, Lee, R.A.,

and others. The painting-room was of the plainest and most unpretending character. It was approached through the kitchen (always beautifully clean and in order) by a narrow flight of stairs, and must at one time have been a servants' bedroom. It was converted into a painting-room by the introduction of a skylight in the roof, besides having a window at the side, with a northern aspect, to be used if required. This room was carpeted with some plain material, and had several tables in it, on which lay colours and brushes, with numbers of sketches and unfinished works in oil and water. On one side was a sort of cupboard over the stairs, having a curtain before it, and in which were stacked unsold drawings on boards, patiently waiting for purchasers. Large portfolios of drawings, finished and unfinished, stood against the walls; and the easel was planted towards the end of the room, so as to enable the artist to retire a few paces to observe the effect of his work. There were no "curios" or knick-knacks lying about, no rare old china, no armour, no statuary, no antique vases, no fine bronzes—nothing whatever that savoured of Wardour Street and the curiosity shops. For such things, as furniture for his painting-room, David Cox had no relish. He loved nothing resembling display, and all about him was of the simplest character. He felt that the possession of such things, as seen in the studios of many artists, was not at all necessary to the production of fine landscapes; and he could derive such inspiration as was needful to him from the contemplation of bare walls. His painting-

room—it was too unpretending to be called a studio—was only a sort of workshop, in which he laboured day after day in the production of works of art. With what success he laboured the world now knows. The world knows also that he was a highly-skilled craftsman, notwithstanding its earlier want of appreciation, and notwithstanding his own occasional misgivings as to his powers. When failing to execute a given passage in some picture to his complete satisfaction, he has been heard to say, half in jest and half in earnest, throwing down his brush in a flurry, “Oh, dear! painting is a most difficult *trade*. I shall never have done learning it.”

It has been said before that Cox cared nothing for luxurious living; he was, in fact, as simple in this matter as in everything else. Plain diet suited him best, and he liked it best. During the latter years of his life, he invariably took for supper a basin of boiled milk, and seemed greatly to enjoy it. The author calls to mind how exceedingly annoyed he was on one occasion, when staying at the Royal Hotel, Edinburgh. A waiter came into the room, and requested an order for dinner, intimating in an unmistakable manner that a simple plain repast would not be tolerated in that establishment, but that a regular hotel dinner, of the usual number of courses, must be ordered, or no attention would be paid to himself and friends; and such a dinner, after much demurring and show of resistance, was at length ordered to be prepared, although the old man would have been better pleased with a simple chop,

could he have had it at once, and without ceremony ; and so, indeed would have been his companions. The dinner, when it came, was good enough, and the waiters were attentive to him ; but poor Cox appeared constrained and uncomfortable, and did not enjoy his repast half as much as he would have done at home from a boiled neck of mutton (a favourite dish with him), some well-cooked potatoes, and a bit of his own sweet home-baked bread, washed down with a glass of bitter beer. He had as great a reputation for his home-baked bread as he had for his pictures. He was proud of this admiration for his bread, and used, with great delight, to recount evidences of it.

David Cox was a sociable, companionable man, by no means shy or reserved in manner. Without being at all what is understood as a talker, or aiming at conversation, he was "chatty" and agreeable, always showing the nice feeling of a gentleman. He was ever a welcome guest at the tables of his friends and patrons ; and many a pleasant little dinner-party has been made up of artist-acquaintances, art lovers, and collectors, when Mr. Cox was expected to honour a friend with his company. Very delightful were those intimate parties, with the interesting chats about art, artists, and all the picture news of the day. Each host had his collection, large or small, of pictorial treasures, including some of the choicest works of the eminent guest ; and it was gratifying to Cox to observe his productions hanging in prominent positions on the walls, and to find that they so bravely held their own

among masterpieces by men who were then more famous than himself. It was a pleasure also to him to receive from those present—whose opinions he knew were based on knowledge and good taste—congratulations on his happy delineations of some of nature's most enchanting features. On returning home from such gatherings, sometimes charged with commissions for new pictures, and with well-merited commendations ringing in his ears, he has retired to rest with the declared resolution to produce something on the morrow that should outdo his previous achievements, and surprise the most enthusiastic of his friends. On these occasions, David Cox was always *the* guest of the day. He was made much of; treated with the most loving regard; all were studious of his comfort and convenience. And surely he was deserving of the utmost consideration—so gifted, so artless, so full of child-like simplicity, so unpretending, natural, and kind! A little hasty and impetuous sometimes in his temper—now and then when offended, he could say sharp things; but his heat was soon over, and all the native kindness of his disposition soon shone out again.

When in good health and spirits, Cox was full of life and humour, and brimming over with small jokes. Many a time has he made his friends laugh at the smart things he has said and done. His humour and frolicsomeness were occasionally most amusing. His old and attached friend, Mr. Charles W. Radclyffe, has related that in his earlier days, when Cox was on a visit to Mr. William Radclyffe, the engraver of many of his

works, and father of the narrator of the anecdote, the two would sometimes go to spend an evening with a brother artist—Mr. J. V. Barber, at that time resident in Birmingham—and they would not unfrequently stay chatting until a late hour. On one of these visits the clock had struck twelve, midnight, before they bade adieu to their host. Drawing near the residence of his friend in George Street, Edgbaston, Cox (to quote the words of the narrator) “would lay hold of the old watchman—for it was in the days of ‘the Charlies’—and make him shout under my mother’s window, ‘Half-past ten o’clock!’ Then Cox would cry out in wild surprise, ‘What? half-past *ten*? Nonsense! it cannot be so late!’ Some one was sitting up for them; for there were no latchkeys in *those* days.”

Some years ago a picture was exhibited at the Royal Academy, painted by Turner, the subject and treatment of which were very extraordinary. It was entitled the “Casting of the Iron Duke,” and was so peculiar in many respects that great fun was made of it in the comic papers of the day. It represented the interior of a foundry. A considerable portion of the subject was kept dim and obscure, and against the walls, looming through the dusk, huge cogged wheels, bars of iron, and rusty fragments of old castings were reared on either side. At the far end was a blaze of fire-light, redolent of the most brilliant hues—red, yellow, and orange; surrounding which (if the author can rely on his memory after the lapse of so long a period) workmen were seen manipulating “the Duke,”

who, seated on horseback, with cocked hat and feather, and looking at the distance very small, and very like a child's Christmas toy, was beheld in midst of the ruddy glow as though he were being roasted alive. Turner, not satisfied with the dazzling effect obtained by surrounding the blazing fire with broad masses of shadow on the walls and roof of the foundry, had determined to make the glow and glare still more effective by opposition of colour. He could conceive nothing that would naturally be seen in the place to answer the desired purpose; and so he introduced, in the immediate front of his picture, stretching from side to side, a row of cut cabbages of the greenest possible hue. These cabbages were a great puzzle to many visitors to the exhibition. Cox was in the Academy one day, looking at this picture, and greatly amused at Turner's ingenious device, when a gentleman and lady came up, and stood some time in contemplation of the singular work. At length the lady exclaimed aloud to her companion, "Whatever are they going to do with those cabbages?" Cox turned round to the lady, he made a polite bow, and gravely replied, "*Boil* them, madam!"

A friend of his, a clergyman residing in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, was in possession of a picture which had been bequeathed to him, and was considered extremely valuable. It was believed to be a genuine work by Gaspar Poussin. The owner submitted the work to his friend Cox for an opinion as to its authenticity. "Mr. Cox," said he, "I know that you are a

very good judge of art, ancient or modern, and I have heard you say that you have greatly admired, and also copied, the landscapes of Gaspar Poussin. Will you kindly examine the picture I have brought with me, and tell me if you think it a genuine work of that painter? I have been told that it is worth a very considerable sum." Cox took the picture in his hands, and at a glance saw that it was a worthless copy. Putting it quietly down on the floor, he said, "Mr. A——, Gaspar Poussin was a great artist—a very great artist, indeed—a much better artist than I am, or ever shall be; and *I* should be ashamed of that thing." The valuable work of art was taken back.

On another occasion a picture was submitted to Cox for his opinion, by a person who was doubtful as to the painter. "Mr. Cox," he said, "will you oblige me by looking at this fine work, and say, if you are able, who was the master that painted it?" "Sir," replied Cox, just glancing at the wretched production, "I am of opinion that the painter of *that* picture never *was* a master!"

Cox was often pestered by people taking very indifferent pictures to him for his opinion as to the painter or the merits of them, but he contrived to keep his temper, although he lost his time, and was never tempted to be angry or uncivil. Once a picture was submitted to him, as being the production of an artist of eminence, and he was requested to say what he thought of its merits. He looked at it a moment and inquired, with a twinkle in his eye, "Did you tell

me this picture was painted by Müller?" "Oh, yes! Mr. Cox. It is undoubtedly by him! but an early work of that master, sir; perhaps a very early work!" "Yes," replied Cox, glancing again at the puerile performance, "so early, sir, that Müller must have been a little girl when he painted it!"

In matters of business Cox liked everything done in a proper business-like manner, and if all did not go on as smoothly and straightforwardly as could be desired, he became nervous, fidgety, and annoyed. For many years he had been accustomed to invest his savings in the Funds, and although the interest was low, he knew that his money was safe, and had no anxiety lest he should lose it. One day he happened to mention to a commercial friend of high repute, that he was about to invest another sum in the Funds, as before, to make his income a little better, when he was strongly urged to place the amount in something that would yield a larger return, and was recommended to purchase shares in a newly-projected business to be established near Birmingham, which promised to be a profitable speculation. So much was said in favour of this investment by his friend, that Cox decided to take the course pointed out, and after some correspondence with the officials of the concern, dispatched his money by letter to make the purchase. He expected that his remittance would have been acknowledged by return of post, but day after day passed by, and no acknowledgment came to hand. He thought this omission was a very bad beginning, and indicated careless, unbusiness-

like conduct on the part of the management. He soon became alarmed for the safety of his money. He could not enjoy his meals, or sleep at night, or work at his pictures with any pleasure. He said to himself, "This will not do for me. I must get my money back, and place it in the Funds, as I have been accustomed to do." Accordingly he applied for his money, and insisted on having it returned. The manager pleaded an "oversight;" but no, it would not do. The money must be returned; and after a little parleying it *was* returned, to get rid of Cox and his importunity. "Now," said the artist, "it shall go into the Funds, and there it shall remain! With a safe three per cent., I shall be able to paint again with peace of mind." Cox was rather careful of his money, and could not endure the thought of its security being jeopardised in any way. It has been said by some that he was fond of money, and did not like to part with it. If this were so, the habit of taking care of it doubtless originated in early days, at a time when he found it a difficult matter to scrape a few pounds together, and when it was essential to husband his small earnings against a "rainy day." But he was very far from being miserly or mean; and if he occasionally preferred to discharge an obligation by giving a small picture instead of parting with his cash, those to whom he was indebted were only too glad to be paid in that manner. And none of them ever discovered that they were losers in the end. It is a fact that some of these pictures, so willingly taken in payment for inconsiderable amounts, have, since Cox's

death, been sold for large sums. One of them—valued by the artist at not more than five or six pounds—has, to the author's knowledge, been purchased by an eminent connoisseur for something near two hundred pounds. Possibly those of Cox's friends who had trifling claims against him, and who could look a little further than others into the future time, would most decidedly have declined payment in any other way, could they with decency have spoken what was uppermost in their thoughts.

David Cox was not much addicted to reading miscellaneous literature. He had no library of books. He had no need to refer to the works of any author for subjects for his pictures. The Book of Nature was all-sufficient for him. His "study" was out of doors, on the mountains, or in the fields; and of these, it must be confessed, he was ever observant, ever thoughtful, ever assiduous student. When desirous of knowing what was going on in the world, he turned to the newspaper for information, and being a Liberal in politics, *The Examiner*, then edited by Fonblanque, was his favourite paper, which for many years he took in. He was by no means a demonstrative politician—at least not during the author's intimacy with him; although it is said that earlier in life he did not shrink from giving free expression to his convictions, and, when residing at Hereford, actually joined a committee to arrange for a public reception of Joseph Hume, the Reformer. Latterly he never obtruded his political opinions in any society. His kindness of heart and consideration for the feelings

of others probably rendered him disinclined to enter into a dispute that might give offence or lead to unpleasant consequences from the use of harsh words and an ebullition of temper; but it was not difficult to discern at any time in what direction his opinions lay, and that his sympathies and convictions were with the advocacy of Liberal progress.

CHAPTER XVI.

His Artistic Characteristics and Distinguishing Merits.

THE distinguishing merits of David Cox as an artist ought by this time to be well understood by all who profess an acquaintance with the British School of landscape painters. In the expression of the qualities of light, space, and air he will almost rank with the mightiest of England's landscape artists—with even Turner himself. In rendering the every-day aspects of Nature, as we are accustomed to see them in our daily walks, he surpassed Turner. In colour, treatment, and effect his works are more natural than those of Turner; more faithful as transcripts of picturesque scenery. They are far more English than his; less idealised, never lifted from earth into fairy-land. They are “racy of the soil.” There is a home-like look and feeling about them; a simple, honest truthfulness; a familiar charm that wins our affections. Cox's perception of the beautiful in Nature was keen and far-seeing, but he aimed only to record that which he saw was good, and not to improve upon what was sufficiently lovely. He was faithful to Nature and faithful to himself. His mind and character are reflected in his works. His love for Nature was most ardent; his sympathy with her manifestations of beauty was all embracing; his delight

in his work was supreme—amounting to a passion. Of the mechanism of art he thought little; his mind ever dwelt upon the effect he desired to realise. Through the means he saw the end. He was a *poet painter*, who, in the sky above him, and even in the weeds beneath his feet, recognised charms that thrilled him with delight, and whose strong desire was by every touch and tint to make others feel as he felt. “Art,” says Emerson, “is Nature passed through the alembic of mind.” The “fire of thought” separates that which is dross from the pure metal left after the purgation. The artist’s mind selects, refines, exalts the beautiful features of Nature, moulding the plastic substance to its will, and imbuing it with something of its own spirituality; and David Cox’s art is Nature passed through the mind of a poet, which vibrated to every manifestation of the beautiful, as the Æolian harp vibrates to all the winds of heaven.

The individuality of David Cox was strongly pronounced, and, as a consequence, his productions are unlike those of any other artist. His “style,” or manner of recording and representing what he saw, felt, and loved in nature, was peculiarly his own. The conceptions he embodied in his works were born of his own spirit. His originality was striking and unquestionable; and, like all original minds, he had to create the taste necessary to the enjoyment of his productions. His reputation, therefore, grew up slowly, but it grew steadily and surely. He did not spring into fame at a bound, as we sometimes behold in the

present day, when men comparatively unknown suddenly, by some lucky chance, rise into popularity, and become famous at once. It was not until after his death that his works received due appreciation, except from a few discerning friends. Many of his finest exhibited drawings were returned to him from the exhibitions unsold. He was paid but small sums for those which were sold, compared with the prices obtained by much inferior artists now for productions of mediocre character. Still, he laboured on with a contented mind. He lived simply, but comfortably; his means were sufficient for his needs; he loved Nature, fondly, passionately; loved his art, with all a true artist's affection; and was conscious that he possessed gifts to record with a certain measure of success the impressions his sensitive mind received from all that was lovely and divine in the objects around him. He also doubtless felt and knew, with a patient confidence, that the time would come when his genius should be acknowledged by the world.

Recalling to memory productions of his skill, which have left on the mind an indelible impression; repicturing their striking features, and the fascinating qualities and effects by which they are characterised; it will occur to many how wonderfully varied are the skies he painted; how soft and soothing, how tender-sweet, how beautifully serene, how full of summer light and warmth, and gladness, are many that glow above his landscapes! Others, how vaporous, how moist, how heavy with rain and tempest, how torn and shattered

by the wind into broken fragments of grey rack! How majestic are his great clouds, piled like Alps above the horizon, white in the blaze of noon, or golden with the glow of evening! How filmy and delicate are his upper *cirri*, lying motionless in snowy puffs and clusters, or drawn by the air in silvery threads across the blue! How grand are his mountain-ranges—near or remote—fading away in the haze of distance, or standing solid and steadfast, where the eye can discern crag and fissure, herb and flower, clothed at the base with majestic woods, and circled at the crest with mists that wrap the splintered ridges in wild wreaths of grey! What pomp in his clustering summer trees! his ancient forests—Sherwood or Arden—how solemn and how full of mystery! How grandly the hoary trunks bend with the weight of years! how gnarled and contorted are the ancient limbs! how pathetic in ruin are the leafless tops, sapless and barkless, shattered by the storms of bygone centuries! how deep the repose of decay, when autumn leaves cover with russet hues the buried green-sward! how full of stormy passion, when boisterous winter gales tear through the forest glades, bend the strong limbs, and splinter the boughs they toss upon their way! His tumbling hill-streams and gently-flowing rivers! His pastures, so verdant and so sweet! His briary hedgerows and his turfy banks! His weedy foregrounds, so dewy and fresh! His heathery wastes, far-stretching in melancholy gloom when the sky above them is wrapt in cloud, or cheerful as a garden full of flowers in the sunlight! Then, how great is his range!

How diversified are his effects! How captivating his subjects and their treatment! How pure and lovely his colour! How large and grand his masses! What stillness in his repose! What magic in his light and shadow! What expression, what poetry, in all he did!

There is a pathetic interest in many of the incidents he has introduced into his works. The poor tired lamb, carried by the shepherd over the rough mountain-road; the dead ewe lying stiff on the dreary moor, its innocent offspring bleating by its side; the old worn-out labourer, sunning his chilly blood upon the bench beside the cottage door, or supporting his tottering limbs with a staff, while he watches the passing funeral, and meditates on the near approach of his own end; the little village children in deep distress, with the broken pitcher at the spring. Incidents of this character, truthful, familiar, homely, are scattered through the works of David Cox. Children and their pleasures always afforded him great delight, and he loved to introduce them in his pictures. Now they are gathering blackberries in the lanes; now flying a kite upon the common; now listening to the song of the lark. Sometimes he gives us lads fishing, or bathing in the shady streams, or flinging stones at an angry bull, or raising a hubbub among the rooks careering round the oaks and beeches in the park. Or he draws for us playful girls returning from school through the lanes, plucking the wild flowers as they linger on their way, or stopping to fondle the kitten at the cottage door.

David Cox, as an artist, had three striking characteristics, which may readily be traced in the majority of his works.

First, he was a *suggestive* painter. He possessed largely the gift of imagination, and addressed himself, in his works, to those endowed with something of that faculty themselves. He was no believer in what is called a close and literal imitation of Nature ; in the vain endeavour to represent every tint and tone, every leaf or stone, or blade of grass. He knew that the labour of a twelvemonth, and the crowding of his canvas with minute details, would bring him no nearer the Infinite than would the work of a day. He felt that at the utmost he could do no more than suggest the endless variety and fulness of Nature, and therefore contented himself with a broad, general, and indicative representation of her features. He closed his eyes to the minute particulars before him ; endeavouring to see Nature only in her breadth and simplicity, and recording the vivid impressions thus made on his mind. And such a seeing of Nature makes a more powerful impression than when the eye is distracted by a multiplicity of details and minute parts. And such a rendering of Nature is more gratifying, from the charms of breadth, simplicity, and largeness of style, than when the subject is broken up into disjointed fragments ; spotted over with little lights and darks ; made to glitter with prismatic hues ; elaborated to the full extent that keen eyes, a steady hand, and weeks of patient toil can accomplish. This broad, simple, and large style was David Cox's in the maturity

of his power. We do not require the artist in his representations of Nature to do everything for us. We like to do something ourselves, in the way of filling up, from hints, indications, and suggestions he may give us in his works. We prefer a little mystery somewhere to feed and stimulate imagination, as well as something positive and definite addressed to our sight and appealing to our perception of the merely literal. It will frequently occur to the landscape artist, when painting from Nature, how much there is in the subject before him which he cannot distinctly discern; what indefiniteness there is everywhere, not only in objects and appearances remote, but in those also which are near. In endeavouring to penetrate into the obscure and mysterious parts of his subject, with a view to a more definite comprehension of their meaning, his imaginative faculty is called into activity, and creates a something to fill up the void when his bodily vision is altogether at fault. A streak of light, or a dot of shadow—a tint or tone, or slight variation of surface, is sufficient to call imagination into play, and to suggest to him forms, features, peculiarities, which might possibly be manifest on a closer inspection, but which are unrevealed and shrouded in mystery at the standpoint from which he regards the scene. And thus the scene, in addition to all its real, palpable, and unmistakable charms, is “rife in beauties not its own.” This activity of the imagination is the source of much of the pleasure the artist derives from the contemplation of Nature. But upon another—seated beside him, and looking

upon the same objects—whose imaginative faculty is feeble and inert, the impression will be very different. His delight will be small; he will perceive nothing but what is obvious to his bodily sense. The rest, which goes to make up the fulness of Nature, will be empty; nothing will be suggested to his mind, and nothing will he, in his work, be able to suggest to others. Those passages which in Nature are full of mystery, will, in his rendering of her, be treated as bald, flat, and empty spaces, shown by washes of plain, unmeaning colour; or he will crowd the void with details not to be seen in Nature, and which he and the unintelligent public will mistake for “finish.” How entirely different will be the productions of the two artists! Few would accept them as representations of the same scene. The one painter will be careful that all those passages which in Nature are characterised by indefiniteness and mystery, shall be so treated in his work as to convey to other minds the same impressions he himself received in the contemplation of her, and with the same pleasurable results. The other will cover every portion of his canvas with unmeaning brushwork, in his anxiety that no part should escape the so-called finish and completeness deemed essential to his style! How entirely opposite to this is the finish of a true artist—such as Turner or Cox. His elaboration is always in the right places—in those parts of a subject where completeness should be visible: this finish is that of character—of all that is essential to the perfect rendering of the salient features of the subject, in form,

colour, gradation of distance, light and shade, in grace and beauty, in power, splendour, and effect. No one could dwell more earnestly, more lovingly, than did Turner on those leading points and conspicuous features upon which he wished the eye to rest. He gave to them, by the utmost care in elaboration, all the character and completeness necessary to the proper understanding and appreciation of their truthfulness and beauty. But no one knew better than he when and where to be indefinite and mysterious. No one could be more suggestive than he was, when definite elaboration would have injured his effect. No artist could appeal more forcibly to the imagination than could Turner, whenever he thought fit, by what he concealed, or by what he merely indicated, or hinted at, or incompletely and imperfectly delineated. Turner's "finish" is most precious; not a line, a tint, a touch could be spared. The other kind of "finish," as it is erroneously called, is nothing but finger-work: unintelligent, signifying nothing, devoid of character, produced by dexterous mechanical movements of the pencil, distributed equally over every portion of the surface; fatiguing to the eye, distracting to the mind, reducing the work to one dead, soulless, uniform level.

Making due allowance for a difference of style—for a bolder and broader manner of working—David Cox proceeded on exactly the same principles as did Turner in carrying his pictures to completion. His finish was always in the right place; his elaboration—to the extent he thought necessary, according to his way of

looking at Nature, and with his peculiar organisation—was exactly where it was required, and nowhere else. Hence the effectiveness of his works; hence their great power to impress us, as he himself was impressed by what he saw and strongly felt; for he dwelt on those features and effects which struck the blow, so to speak, as he looked at Nature, and which stamped the first impression of their character and beauty on his mind.

Secondly, David Cox was eminently a *truthful* painter. He saw nature as it really appears to a healthy, unsophisticated mind. Not many artists are so highly favoured. Some pass a considerable portion of their lives in “painting from nature,” dwelling perhaps amid beautiful scenery, possessed of fair ability, having the requisite knowledge of the principles and resources of their art; yet the result of their labours, as regards the truthful resemblance of what they attempt to portray, is a failure. They do not see Nature as she is. We are not carried out of doors, as it were, among the fields and woods and mountains, when we look upon their works. There is neither fresh air nor pure colour in them. Such men as these sit down before Nature, not to represent faithfully that which she is, for they do not, or will not, see her as she is; but to produce something which shall be in accordance with a preconceived notion of effect, or possibly some favourite scheme of colour, or mode of accomplishing results, which they adapt to the subject. The consequence is a striking unreality. Special qualities of organisation, in some instances, physical or

mental, in a marked degree determine the character of the work. An artist shall be born with what is termed a "grey eye." When he looks at nature, he sees little but what is grey to him. The greyness predominates in every object. The consequence is that his transcripts are invariably grey and cold—frequently repulsively so—we shiver as we look at them. Critics conclude, hastily, that he does not represent what he sees. The probability is, he does see what he represents, but that he does not see all, and that we do not see as he does. We therefore condemn his work as wanting in truthfulness. Another artist, differently organised, is gifted with an "eye for colour." In looking at nature, the greyness is lost, or nearly lost, upon him. He sees the splendour of tint and tone; the endless variety of Nature's hues appeals to his sensitive vision; he applies all the resources of his palette to produce a representation of the effects of colour displayed before him; and from this excess he not improbably fails in truthfulness. Now David Cox was so happily organised as to have possessed a keen perception of Nature's atmospheric greyness in the gradations of distance, and also an eye for her strongest and her most subtle effects of colour. Hence the exceeding truthfulness and naturalness of his works, in which we have both excellences in happy combination. Cox's slightest sketches have as great an appearance of truthfulness as his more finished works. Let the subject be only a cottage by the roadside, a group of trees, with a fragment of park paling, an old water-

mill, or a windmill at the edge of a common; two or three cart-horses or cows, grazing in a pasture; a team at plough, or a husbandman stalking over the furrowed land, and casting seed to the right and left of him as he goes; however simple in character, and however slight in the making out, there is an appearance of truthfulness in these hasty memoranda which strikes all beholders at the first glance. In very many instances they would be spoiled if another touch were put upon them. They seem complete as they are. Cox went to the heart of the matter at once, and a few strokes and tints fixed it on the paper with all the requisite effect. He seized immediately on the leading characteristics of his subject, and lost no time in dwelling on features not essential to the truth of what he desired to tell. For this reason so many of his sketches and unfinished works possess charms which a higher stage of finish would seriously impair.

Thirdly, David Cox was an *English* painter by love and choice, as well as by the accident of birth: he gave the preference to the scenery of his own country. He cared not to depict the views in Any-man's land or in No-man's land. He had little of the visionary idealist in his composition, and shrank from allowing his imagination to conjure up dreams of ancient Italy or classic Greece as subjects on which to exercise his artistic skill. He rarely indulged in soaring flights of this ambitious character. Once or twice, perhaps, he made excursions into this poetic region, but soon found it was no home for him, and returned like the prodigal

to his fatherland. It is true he visited the Continent on several occasions, and found material there to interest him, especially in the street scenes and picturesque buildings; but for the scenery of his own country, its freshness, variety, and homeliness, he had an affection which he could never feel for that of any other land. He was not merely content to spend his life in delineating the unpretending subjects he found within the sea-washed boundaries of England and Wales; he rejoiced in it, and found endless delight in the picturesque bits of rural landscape that lay close to his door—the rustic dwellings of the peasantry, the farms and homesteads, the old green lanes, the furze-clad commons, the wild heathy wastes, the ruin-crowned hills, the woods, waters, moorlands, and storm-beaten mountains of his own dear land. He had a strong affection for the “effects” incidental to our fickle climate and variable weather. The humid skies and frequent showers that fill the delicate with alarm, and strike the foreigner aghast, were to him a source of endless pleasure; and he never wearied of repeating them in his works. Although he has given us many skies of a bright and cheerful character—skies beaming with golden sunshine, or serenely dappled with blue and white—his preference was manifest for skies suggestive of moist and rainy and lowering weather. He loved the sweet grey of the rain-cloud. He loved the gloom of gathering or bursting storm. He delighted in the grand effects displayed by skies of this character, especially in mountainous districts. He loved also the

fleeting effects of light and shadow produced by skies in which cloud chases cloud across the blue expanse, and broad waves of sunshine, with alternate shadows, sweep over hill and dale, meadow and woodland, giving to inanimate Nature an expression like that which a passing emotion of joy or sadness imparts to the face of man.

CHAPTER XVII.

Remarks in Conclusion—Influence of Cox's Works and Genius on the Landscape Art in this Country, and on the Public Taste.

REFLECTING on the artistic career of David Cox, it is impossible not to be impressed with a sense of his persevering and incessant industry; his unwearied application to study; his firm self-reliance, in spite of many discouragements; his earnest devotion to his art. He never depended for great results on spurts and flashes of genius, but strove to acquire all knowledge needful in his pursuit; he was a learner even when he was acknowledged as a master. He was always at work, either with brush or pencil in hand, or considering subjects to be taken up. The immense number of his works, finished and unfinished, both in oil and water-colour, affords evidence sufficient of his untiring industry and of the fertility of his mind. That he was gifted with genius in a consummate degree few at this time will be inclined to dispute. His sensibility to the beautiful in Nature must have been most exquisite, or he could not have recorded the subtle and manifold charms he beheld with such wonderful effect. Imagination—within the range of the subjects he best loved—was transcendent in him. The daring courage with which he attacked subjects and effects most difficult to deal with; the absolute foreknowledge of what he intended to do; the directness and

certainly with which he did it at a stroke ; all indicate the master-mind—that indefinable quality, the union of perception and power, which we call genius. In many of his drawings it is delightful to observe with what sureness of hand and unerring precision he worked his way to the designed result. Not a touch too many or too few. Not a tint misplaced. Neither too weak nor too strong. His colour may be said to be always right for the place, and to be always kept subservient to the effect of the whole. His sweetness is unsurpassed in its tenderness and grace ; his strength has few rivals in its majesty and splendour.

The Author's admiration of the genius of Cox and the merit of his works may by some be deemed too enthusiastic ; but he would like to ask, who has depicted the green lanes of England, with the picturesque beauty and the poetry peculiar to them, more successfully than David Cox ? Who has shown us the lowly dwelling of the peasant by the quiet meadow-side, or on the wild mountain moor, the mill by the brawling stream, the grey church-tower above the trees, the peaceful village, the time-worn priory or baronial hall, with more of truthfulness and beauty than he has done ? Who has illustrated seed-time and harvest, has put before us smiling meadows, with flocks and herds knee-deep in verdure, or summer hay-fields, filled with life, more happily, with greater truth and beauty, than David Cox ? Who has depicted the dreary wastes, the rocky torrents, the purple deep-toned solemn mountain heights of his beloved Wales with subtler skill ? Dear old David

Cox! We bless thy memory for the sweet glimpses of Nature given us in thy faithful works. We gratefully view through thy loving eyes the manifold beauties of our own dear land.

If we cast a retrospective view over the life of David Cox, through a period comprising the whole of his artist career, we arrive at the conclusion that on the whole his was a happy life. True, in early days he had to struggle to live, and knew what it was to encounter the frowns of fortune, having sometimes been hard put to it to find the means of subsistence. True, he not unfrequently felt that teaching others to draw was irksome drudgery, which his spirit rebelled against, and by which it was often beaten down, bruised if not broken. True, he was many a time greatly dissatisfied with his studies from nature, and has torn up in vexation the results of many a day's hard work, and thrust the fragments down the drains of London streets, disgusted with his feeble attempts to delineate what he had admired. But of what were these troubles when compared with his great reward? And this reward came of his true manliness. He was never vanquished, if sometimes overthrown. There was courage in his heart and elasticity in his spirit to enable him to return to his work with renewed and augmented energy, even after failure. Then he had the rare felicity of choosing his own work in life and of ordering it according to his wish.

Nor was the life one to be despised for its enjoyments, independent of art. He sat, day after day and year after year, in the fresh, open country, amidst

the most lovely scenery, with the birds warbling around, the sweet air blowing freely around him, and the brightness of sunshine filling him with delight. It was his work to note and record for the pleasure and the instruction of thousands, the delicious calm of eventide, the glories of rising and setting suns, the terrors of storm and tempest, the varying hues and effects of the changing seasons, the occupations of out-of-door existence, of all that world of life and beauty of which the dwellers in towns know little, and concerning which the toilers pent in workshop, warehouse, or busy wharf, pass through existence in ignorance of their charms. He was happy in the knowledge that such was the lot in life marked out for him. He was happy in the conviction that he was organised to receive exquisite pleasure from all he saw around him; that he was endowed with the power to record those impressions for the delight of others, and to awake in their minds something of the ecstasy which filled his own. As time wore on, he was happy to feel and know that his genius was admitted by many whose good opinion was a recompense for all his labours; that his works were coveted and prized by the educated and discerning among his countrymen; and that his place in English art was assured. He was happy, as he advanced in years, to behold around him, as the result of long-continued industry, commendable frugality, and honest self-control, the comforts and conveniences of life; to know that his struggles for existence were all over;

and that prosperity and plenty were his at last. And he was especially happy in the reflection that he should be enabled to leave behind him for those who were dear to him as life itself, sufficient for their every need.

The money savings of David Cox, the produce of his brush, amounted to a sum of about £12,000—small enough, doubtless, but not so poor, considering the times in which he lived, and the moderate value he set upon his works. Some popular artists of our day would repine if they could not put by—or, more probably, spend—as large a sum as this every two or three years. But it must be remembered that Cox was not popular with the class that buys pictures quickly, and at high prices. The dealers thought little of him until he was dead; and “patrons” depend very much upon the dealers’ guidance. Cox had to educate his public before he could sell his works, and the operation required time, and a persistent struggle for opportunities. However, he contrived to put by from his earnings the sum of £12,000, leaving handsome legacies to his grandchildren, to his old and faithful servant, and the residue to his son. He also bequeathed to the latter all his unsold works of every kind, which, when offered for sale a few years after his death, and when his fame had become diffused, realised the not unimportant amount of something approaching to £26,000. After all, not so very bad.

Let us now leave him, resting in his humble grave, in the churchyard of his beloved Harborne, with the chaplet he has won encircling his revered

grey hairs, and the affections of those to whom he was endeared following his spirit to that other world wherein it dwells, amid delights that shall know no ending!

In concluding this chapter, a few remarks may be permitted on the influence which the works and genius of David Cox have exercised upon the landscape-art of this country, and on the public taste.

There can be little doubt that Cox's choice of home scenery, and his revelation of its beauties, have shown both to artists and the public the surpassing loveliness and interest of the landscape material to be found in endless abundance at home. Multitudes of landscape painters have followed the footsteps of Cox over those parts of the country where he found his most captivating subjects. Bettws-y-coed, in particular, his favourite and memorable haunt, has for years been the regular camping-ground of men anxious to rival him in his own special field. The productions of some of these have perhaps exhibited too close a resemblance to the works of the master whose genius they admired; but many, without being in any sense imitators of Cox, nevertheless display proofs that their authors have been deeply influenced by him as regards feeling and treatment, and by his peculiar way of looking at Nature. The works of such artists have been distributed throughout the land, and the public taste has been elevated. In a word, Cox taught other painters how to see Nature, and where to look for her beauties; and those whom he thus influenced have diffused his teaching through the ranks of all who care for Art.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Special Exhibitions of Cox's Works—Liverpool Art Club Banquet.

SHORTLY before the death of David Cox, towards the end of 1858, and again, at the beginning of 1859, as many of his works as were available were collected for public exhibition. The first of these exhibitions was held at Hampstead, in the rooms of the Conversazione Society, and attracted a large number of visitors from all parts of the country. Several artists of eminence interested themselves in it, and Mr. E. Field delivered an admirable address at the opening. In April of the following year a more considerable collection was made. Nearly 170 works in oil and water-colour were exhibited at the German Gallery in New Bond Street. The lenders comprised some of the best-known names amongst the collectors of modern works of art: and the profits of the exhibition were devoted to the augmentation of the Artists' Benevolent Fund.

The last and most comprehensive collection of the artist's productions was brought together in Liverpool, at the close of 1875, by the persevering energy of the members of the Art Club of that city, and was opened to the public in their rooms in Myrtle Street. No trouble or expense was spared in bringing this collection together from all quarters, and every work was

insured at the value set upon it by the owner; the sum total reaching to about one hundred thousand pounds. The collection numbered altogether 448 works of all periods; and, notwithstanding that many of Cox's finest productions could not be had, the exhibition was considered fairly representative of the artist's genius. It contained *fifty-seven* pictures in oil; among them were some of Cox's best works of the kind. The remainder were drawings in water-colours, sepia, and charcoal. Of those in charcoal there were *thirty-nine* examples; and nearly *fifty* in sepia.* There was also one pen-and-ink sketch from nature, dated as early as 1805, and contributed by the author of this Memoir. The water-colour drawings were exceedingly varied in character and subject, and showed the progress made by the artist from the commencement to the close of his career. The following notice of the exhibition is taken from *The Birmingham Daily Post* of November 15th, 1875, the proprietors of which paper sent a special reporter to Liverpool, to furnish an account of the exhibition. It may interest some to know the names of the lenders of those works exhibited on that occasion,

* Cox made many drawings in black chalk, charcoal, and sepia. The majority are exceedingly fine. Of those in chalk, the author is not aware of any number of them gathered into a collection; but Mr. Perrins, of Worcester, possesses about thirty-six beautiful drawings in charcoal (which he lent for exhibition in the Liverpool Art Club collection); and Mr. Alfred Betts, of Birmingham, is the owner of a most captivating collection of twenty works in sepia. Many of them are characterised by beauty of subject and most skilful treatment. Cox produced his chalk and charcoal drawings with great facility. They are chiefly studies from nature, and are exceedingly effective. He usually had them made up into books, containing about a dozen each.

and to read the particulars of the proceedings on the opening day:—

Among the many movements which are now taking place with the object of elevating and refining the artistic taste of Liverpool, none are more laudable or have been more successful, than the exhibitions held from time to time by the Liverpool Art Club, which was established about two years ago, largely through the exertions of Mr. James L. Bowes (who is well known as a most thorough and devoted student of Japanese art), Mr. P. H. Rathbone, and other gentlemen of artistic tastes. Exhibitions have been held of specimens of goldsmiths' art, Japanese bronze, lacquer-ware, porcelain manufacture, etchings, pictures of living and of deceased British artists, Belgian and Dutch pictures, embroidery, and other interesting art specimens, mainly contributed by gentlemen residing in or near Liverpool. The promoters of the club have now made a collection of the works of David Cox, and the exhibition will be opened to the public to-morrow, the press view taking place on Saturday. The committee appear to have exercised great care and discretion in the selection of the pictures, which have been readily sent by collectors from all parts of the country. There are four hundred and forty-eight works in all, fifty-seven of which are in oil, and the remainder in water-colour and charcoal. The early, middle, and later styles of the great artist are represented by many fine and varied examples. The oil-paintings include "Going to the Hayfield," painted in 1849, and contributed by Mr. Page, of Birmingham, in which Cox's treatment of a simple rural subject is very powerfully shown, as well as his peculiarity of giving life and motion to figures; the "Big Meadow, near the 'Royal Oak,' Bettws-y-coed," painted in 1853, contributed by Mr. Holbrook Gaskell; "Flying the Kite" (1851), also contributed by Mr. Gaskell, in which a fine example is given of the artist's power of representing space and distance, and the play of the wind upon surrounding objects. The "Welsh Funeral," contributed by Mr. Gaskell, is one of the scenes which had evidently impressed Cox from its pathos and simplicity, and its main incidents are repeated in some other works. "Darley Churchyard" (1850), contributed by Mr. E. Crompton Potter, is a very fine specimen of colouring. In

“Windsor Castle and Park” (1846), contributed by Mr. F. Nettlefold, of London, a noble sweep of woodland landscape is presented, crowned by the castle in the distance. There is more detail tree-painting in the “Skirts of the Forest” (1855—6), contributed by Mr. J. H. Nettlefold, of Birmingham. In “Lancaster Sands” (1855), contributed by Mr. J. E. Taylor, of Manchester, there is another instance of the painter’s skill in investing a simple, and what to ordinary minds would be a common-place subject, with the charms of imagination. This part of the coast was one of his favourite resorts, and, as was the case with the places that he loved, he painted it over and over again in various moods of weather and atmosphere. Of Bettws, where Cox also delighted to dwell, there are many interesting memorials in the collection, both amongst the oil and water colours; while there are numerous illustrations also of the wild and rugged mountain fastnesses in North Wales, where the painter was wont to linger in his more active days. On the screens are some pictures in his more careful and finished manner; and the sepia and charcoal drawings, which are shown in rooms up-stairs, contain some very characteristic and interesting sketches. In the main gallery is exhibited the portrait of Cox, by Sir J. W. Gordon, lent by the Council of the Birmingham and Midland Institute. Amongst the Birmingham and other local contributors are Mrs. Bullock, Mrs. Betts, Mrs. Rhodes, and Messrs. J. Archer, R. L. Chance, J. T. Collins, Alfred Betts, John Betts, Wm. Everitt, W. Fallows, Dr. Bell Fletcher, Geo. Graham, Joseph Gillott, B. Hall, Wm. Hall, J. Hawkins, J. A. Kenrick, Wm. Kenrick, M. Lindner, J. H. Mole, J. H. Nettlefold, T. Page, C. T. Parsons, C. W. Radclyffe, S. Timings, Horace Woodward, and the Rev. C. J. Sale, of Holt, Worcester. Prefixed to the catalogue is an introduction written by Mr. William Hall—one of the artist’s most intimate friends—giving some account of his life, his method of working, and a critical notice of his genius. It forms a record well worth permanent keeping. On Saturday the members of the club and contributors dined together.

The dinner alluded to in the foregoing notice was a great success. The following account of it is taken from the Liverpool *Daily Post* of November 15th:—

To celebrate the opening of the exhibition, the President of the Art Club, Mr. James L. Bowes, invited a number of gentlemen to dine at the Club on Saturday evening, and afterwards to witness the collection. The president himself occupied the chair, and there were also present, Mr. Benson Rathbone, Mr. Wm. Mathison, Mr. Arthur Robinson, Mr. Philip H. Rathbone, the Rev. C. Beard, the Rev. C. Parnell, Mr. Holbrook Gaskell (Chairman of the Cox Exhibition Committee), Mr. Gustav Busek, Mr. John Finnie, Mr. W. Hind, Mr. C. R. Russell, Mr. Louis Greg, Mr. Enoch Harvey, Mr. W. D. Holt, Mr. Robert D. Holt, Mr. Gilbert W. Moss, Mr. F. G. Prange, and Mr. B. H. Grindley (Secretary of the Cox Exhibition Committee). The following contributors from a distance were also present:—Messrs. C. W. Radclyffe, Birmingham; H. B. Roberts, Frederick Nettlefold, London; J. H. Nettlefold, Birmingham; E. Stirling Howard, Sheffield; Dr. Bell Fletcher, Birmingham; Mr. J. Beavington Atkinson, Hon. Sec. Burlington Fine Arts Club, London; and Mr. Edward T. Bellhouse, President Brazenose Club, Manchester.

Speeches were delivered by Mr. Bowes, the president; by Dr. Bell Fletcher, Cox's medical adviser; Mr. Frederick Nettlefold, of London; Mr. C. W. Radclyffe, of Birmingham, an old friend of David Cox; Mr. Holbrook Gaskell; Mr. E. R. Russell, who responded for the Press; Mr. H. B. Roberts, and Mr. J. Finnie, who represented local art. The speech of Mr. Radclyffe, which was one of the most telling addresses delivered on the occasion, and which gave some amusing anecdotes and interesting information respecting Cox, it may be desirable to preserve. He said:—

I thank you, Mr. President, for the kind manner in which you have proposed my health. It is a great thing for men immersed in business, as you gentlemen are, to have thrown yourselves so heartily into the labour of getting together this magnificent collection of the works of David Cox. There is no doubt this should have been done in his native town—Birmingham; but failing this, and as Cox was a

man for all places and all men, I have felt it a great privilege to afford you all the aid I could. [Mr. Radclyffe arranged the collection for the Club.] There is one great similarity between David Cox and myself—he never could, and never did, make a speech. When his portrait was presented to him at a banquet given by his friend Mr. Charles Birch, at Metchley Abbey, I called for him on my way thither, and said he would have to make a speech. “Oh, no!” he said, “I shan’t.” Turning to his old servant, Ann Fowler, he said, “Mind and have my bread and milk ready by nine o’clock!” After his health had been drunk at the dinner, he got up, and in a very few words thanked us all. Soon after, he turned round to me, and said he must go, as he was sure his supper was ready. I walked over to his house with him, and he took his simple meal, like a school-boy, which he always was, for Cox never got old in mind; he was always fresh and simple as a child, full of fun and small jokes. I remember when he was staying at my father’s, which he often did a month at a time. My father and he used frequently to spend an evening with J. V. Barber, the artist, who generally kept them very late. [Mr. Radclyffe then told the anecdote of Cox and the old watchman, narrated in the body of this work, which created great amusement. He went on :]—We often hear it said, in much sadness, when one of Cox’s pictures is sold for thousands, when he only had a few pounds for it, “Poor fellow! what a shame he did not reap a better reward!” I really think it is far better as it is. No man more thoroughly enjoyed his life. His habits and tastes were of the most simple kind. He saved what to him was a large competency, and a good fortune for his only son. His house, with all the surroundings, was a model of English comfort. Suppose he had been besieged by patrons and dealers, he might have launched out—I do not say he would—into extravagant habits, had a huge magnificent painting-room, filled with all the paraphernalia of Wardour Street; he might have kept his carriage, taken his ’40 port, and died twenty years before he did; and instead of being remembered by troops of friends as a dear, simple friend, only thought of as a big Mogul. No, I would not like his life to have been changed one bit. His troubles and sorrows were not over-burdensome, and he was beloved by all who came in contact with him. I look back to the hours I have spent with him with a keen relish and delight few can realise;

sitting with him in the little room he always painted in when at my father's, whilst very often my mother read aloud. On one occasion, I remember she read "Ben Brace," by Captain Chamier. Cox in one part could not go on for his tears, which were falling fast at some pathetic passage. The evenings his friend William Hall and myself spent at Greenfield, are photographed in my mind, never to be forgotten. We were always there one evening in each week, more often twice; sometimes to tea, always to supper, just half a cigar, whilst we looked over a folio of drawings, or discussed a great subject already rubbed in with charcoal. Sometimes Cox was a little out of spirits, but his grumblings were short and sweet, and if he now and then repined at his want of success, he never envied a more fortunate rival. Turner, Müller, De Wint, and Copley Fielding are great names; but I question if any of them appeal to us with the same force as David Cox. We allow their genius and greatness, but there is something irresistible in the works of Cox; their grandeur or sweetness touch our hearts at once. He picked up incidents and effects of colour and sunshine as no other man ever did or will do. Look at that grand, pathetic picture, the "Welsh Funeral"—solemn, but full of flowers and light and hope; nothing dismal or funereal about it—a simple peasant going to her home in the mountains. Who would not die, to have such a song painted over him? Look at the picture called the "Skylark," glittering with dew-drops and gorgeous with light. Who could ever cage a lark after looking on that picture? What old men he drew—tottering, but sturdy, on their bandy legs, fit mates for the old women driving their geese, or trudging across the common to market! Then what horses—shaggy-coated, broad-chested, made to carry the old fellow who is asking the way! And then what cows he painted—real farm-yard dairy cows, horned cattle with bones and rough hair, not the sleek things we too often see, with glossy skins fit for dress-waistcoats! His figures were always well drawn, always appropriate, and we feel they are necessary to the picture—which is rarely the case with figures in a landscape. Cox always seized upon something—either a grand or simple bit; and he was always at work. I remember him bringing home a very lovely sketch made at Sale, of a man filling a water-cart. Once, when sitting painting at our house, my mother entered the room draped in deep black. Cox called to her, "Stop!" and made a capital sketch

of her, which is now in this gallery. Two great complaints have been made against him—one that he never could “*draw!*”—what a mercy he could not!—and another, he had never gone through freehand drawing, or drawing from the flat. Another was, he had no imagination! Fancy, with an incident or a story in every sketch or picture he ever painted, saying he had no imagination! ’Tis a mercy he had none of the kind they mean, or we might have had angels and nightmare visions enough to startle a Dante! Although his work looks so easy, no man was so difficult to please; and I have sat by him when he has torn up drawing after drawing. He knew no tricks in art; his work was always pure and simple. He used the most simple colours and means to record his great ideas. A few days before he died he went up-stairs leaning on the arm of his faithful Ann. Stopping at his painting-room door, he looked in and said, “Good-bye, pictures! Good-bye, pictures! I shall never see you any more!” and he never did!

In connection with this exhibition of the works of Cox, and arising out of it, was the publication in September of the following year, by the Liverpool Art Club, of three fine engravings after Cox, by Mr. Edward Radclyffe, deceased, entitled the “Cox Liber Studiorum.” The following extract from the advertisement prefixed will explain the circumstances under which the publication was undertaken :—

The Liverpool Art Club, while collecting the works of David Cox for the exhibition which excited so general an interest in the autumn of 1875, learned that it had been in contemplation to publish a Cox Liber Studiorum, devoted to the special qualities of English landscape and atmosphere, and engraved in that method of etching, combined with mezzotint, which distinguishes Turner’s Liber Studiorum from other engravings. These plates were completed in the highest style of art, by the eminent engraver, and friend of David Cox, Edward Radclyffe. Death, unhappily, caused the project to be abandoned, as no other engraver has hitherto been found combining all the qualities necessary to overcome the diffi-

culties of the task; and the three plates have remained unpublished until now. Those who examine them must feel that, by the untimely death of Mr. Radclyffe, England has been deprived of a magnificent tribute to the peculiar beauties of her scenery, and to those manifold charms of her skies which constitute the recompense for the variable climate which causes them.

The three plates were acquired by the Liverpool Art Club, under the guarantee of a few of its members, and are now issued under conditions which insure that none but the very finest proof impressions shall exist. The issue is restricted to one hundred and fifty impressions, which have been produced without the slightest perceptible deterioration. Of these one hundred were offered to members of this Club and the Burlington Fine Arts Club, and to the exhibitors of the Cox Exhibition, and have been eagerly taken up. Twenty-five are to be distributed amongst the chief libraries of the country, and twenty-five are reserved by the Club as a method of paying an unique compliment to those whom it may be especially desired to recognise as earnest workers in the cause of Art.

The subjects of the plates are—First, "Dudley Castle," with the canal and limekilns in the foreground. A very fine subject. Second, "The Outskirts of a Forest." A favourite subject of the artist. Third, "Bala Lake, North Wales." A subject of remarkable beauty.

The work was published by Messrs. Colnaghi and Co., London, for the Liverpool Art Club. The admirers of David Cox will regret that Mr. Edward Radclyffe did not live to complete the task he had proposed to himself: to render the "*Cox Liber Studiorum*" a comprehensive exhibition of the artist's genius and power.

CHAPTER XIX.

(ADDITIONAL—BY THE EDITOR.)

Supplementary Notes—Cox's Great Contemporaries—Birmingham Friends—
Character and Habits—Engravings—Prices—Sales, Chronology, &c.

A FEW notes are needed to supplement in some respects the Memoir of David Cox prepared by Mr. Hall. They are necessarily of a somewhat discursive character, as they merely aim at supplying omissions in the Memoir; but the writer hopes they will not be found wanting in usefulness and interest.

The writer of the Memoir, it will be observed, makes no attempt to fix the place of Cox in relation to water-colour art, historically; nor does he enter upon any comparison of Cox with his more eminent contemporaries. Such an estimate, indeed, belongs to a history of Water-colour Art in this country; a work which would be of high value, if it were executed by some competent person, and would supply a deficiency which is now seriously felt. The only attempt to deal systematically with the subject is to be found in Mr. Samuel Redgrave's "Descriptive Catalogue of the Historical Collection of Water-colour Paintings in the South Kensington Museum;" but this work, though most interesting and useful so far as it extends, does not profess to enter upon a comparative critical examination of the English Water-colour School. The revival and development of this branch of

Art is due to the remarkable company of water-colour painters who were contemporary with Cox. The practical founder of the School, Thomas Girtin, was born in 1773, ten years before Cox. He was followed in 1774 by George Barret, and in 1775 by Turner, the great master of landscape art; John Varley was born in 1778; John Sell Cotman in 1782; Cox himself in 1783; Samuel Prout in the same year; Peter de Wint in 1784; and Copley Fielding in 1787. Thus, no period of Water-colour Art is more brilliant, or presents such an array of memorable, and even illustrious contemporary painters. Of these, setting Turner aside, Cox is beyond comparison the most widely known, and the greatest, alike in his range, the vigour of his method, and his direct appeal to the sympathy, and, it may be justly said, the affection of picture-lovers. His hold upon the public mind is most remarkable in one respect, as compared with his contemporaries. They seem to have receded into the far distance—so to speak, they have become “old masters.” No one thinks of Varley or Barret, or Cotman, or De Wint, or Copley Fielding, as within the range of personal memory. With Cox it is widely different. He seems to be still amongst us, or so close to our time that he still is felt as an almost actual presence. Yet it is now nearly a century since his birth; and nearly a generation has elapsed since the period of his death. The preservative influence which has kept him so close to us, in honour as a painter and in affection as a man, seems to be of a twofold character: his infinite variety in the choice of subject, his fidelity to Nature, and his

keen sympathy with her homelier aspects; and the sweet and tender qualities of his personal character, and the simplicity and friendliness of his life. On the former of these topics enough has been said in Mr. Hall's Memoir. On the latter, those who knew David Cox—and there are some of these still left in Birmingham—are never tired of talking. “Old Farmer Cox,” Turner used to call him; “Dear old David Cox,” was the familiar expression of his friends. These two designations paint the man for us with force and truthfulness: the former expresses his bluff, hearty, homely, farmer-like, out-of-doors kind of manner; the latter sums up, in one sentence, the moral and mental qualities which endeared Cox to all who came frequently into intercourse with him. Modesty, simplicity, truthfulness, singleness of purpose—these were the notes of his character; they are apparent in his works and in his life. There was no trace of mere selfishness about David Cox. He was content with modest gains from the exercise of his art; he never vaunted himself or his powers, he never sought commendation, or repined at not receiving it; he never depreciated the merits of other painters, in order indirectly to exalt his own. Indeed, even at the height of his fame, and in the maturity of his powers, he had always a feeling, often expressed in his own quiet way, that others could do better work, or could do it more easily, than himself. Sensitive he was, doubtless—that is inseparable from the artist nature—but he never permitted this feeling to pass into a morbid phase. No fretful complaint ever passed his lips at the fuller

measure of popular appreciation or of pecuniary success attained by painters of capacity inferior to his own.

On the contrary, his tendency was to self-depreciation, and to a generous recognition of the claims of his contemporaries. The simplicity of his character can be justly described only as being child-like. He was invariably trustful, very faithful to his friends, open and candid with them, frank in his intercourse, honest in the expression of his opinions, and most desirous that his friends should be just as honest and frank with him. He was eminently a social man; nothing gave him greater delight than the company of a few attached friends—in the studio, on sketching excursions, in a pleasant country walk, in familiar conversation after working hours. The even temperament of his mind especially fitted him to enjoy such intercourse. Assumption was wholly foreign to him, and hateful. He had no testiness; occasionally he grew warm in argument, but he was never passionate or unjust, and the display of warmth was but momentary. To those commonly about him he was invariably courteous and kind; few men kept servants so long as he did, or received from them such loving attention; yet the simple dignity of his character and bearing effectually prevented the familiarity which breeds contempt. All who approached him felt this: it was impossible to be rude with David Cox, or to be irreverent, or coarse, or even rough in his company. Even those who saw him but rarely felt the influence which, as if by instinct, commanded respect, while it inspired affection. There

was, in truth, an air of goodness about him which made itself recognised without assertion. It was the same with his religious feeling. In this there was no ostentation, but, nevertheless, there was an obvious sincerity, too plain to be mistaken; not that he was in any degree sombre, nor was there in him any touch of Pharisaism. His religion was part of his daily life, just as was his devotion to art, and his fulfilment of all that seemed to him to be a duty. Cheerfulness was a marked characteristic of David Cox. He talked with ease and vivacity; he liked a harmless joke or a good story; he was an especial favourite with young people; and he loved music, provided it was lively. This last-named taste survived to his later years. Once he showed it in a remarkable way. A lady to whom he was much attached—Mrs. Everitt, the wife of his old friend Mr. Edward Everitt—played some lively dance music in his hearing. Cox bade her repeat it; and then he broke out into a quick step, accordant with the tune. It reminded him, he said, of his early days at the theatre; yet, so far as the writer knows, he rarely, if ever, entered a theatre after the severance of his connection with Macready's company; certainly never in his maturer life. In fact, he felt no want of amusement; his art supplied him with recreation as well as occupation. His old friends well remember that all his talk was of Art—its pleasures, its incidents, its practice; of work achieved or contemplated; of sketching tours past or prospective. His letters—the few he wrote, for he cared little for correspondence—are full of the same

topic ; and even in his hours of idleness, when visiting friends or receiving them, he commonly asked for paper and pencil, and busied himself in drawing. Art, indeed, was his life ; from the day on which a kind friend in his boyhood gave him a colour-box, to the hour when he took his pathetic farewell of his pictures, his whole time and thought and affection were given to Art. It was a life very noble in its unity of aim, in its firmness of purpose, in its industry, in its courage before obstacles, in the fulness of its triumph—a life that confers rare distinction upon the man who lived it, and that enriches the annals of the Art he loved.

The simplicity and modesty of Cox's personal character were admirably expressed in his house and his mode of living. Plain, homely comfort, in furniture, in dress, in food, was all that he cared for ; he was singularly temperate, though never ascetic, nor even markedly abstemious. Neatness and exquisite cleanliness characterised his person and his home ; but there was no luxury, and little ornament. Of books he had very few ; he was not a cultured man, in this aspect of culture ; his education was drawn from the great book of Nature, and this he knew so thoroughly, and loved so well, that he was master of it. He found its lessons hard to construe, sometimes, and harder to interpret ; but if he failed he tried again, with patient humbleness and earnest perseverance, and thus, in each effort, he finally mastered the secret that lay hidden in the object of his study. Cox never complained, like Fuseli, that " Nature put him

out!" He had learned, rather, with Wordsworth, that—

"Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her."

It was not until after his death that the world began to appreciate David Cox in his full greatness, and to recognise his true place in art. A few discerning critics, and a little band of attached friends, understood him perfectly in his lifetime, but the bulk of people who professed to care for art have only of late years discerned that as a master of English landscape he stands unapproached save by Turner, and that in some respects he surpassed Turner himself. His range of art is marvellous, alike as to period, to subject, and to manner. For over fifty years he was a painter, skilled in resource, unsurpassed in industry; there was nothing that he did not include in his works—landscape, figures, buildings, animals, fish, fruit, still life, flowers; the commonest and most familiar aspects of Nature, her subtlest gradations, her sublimest effects, all found perfect expression by means of his facile and powerful brush. His manner was as varied as his range of subject. His early style was dry, hard, and somewhat formal, but marked by indications of power and freedom that were afterwards to ripen into splendid maturity. In his second manner, or middle period, he exhibited perfect command over materials, elaborate finish, most careful and refined drawing, exquisitely tender and even brilliant colour. In his later manner he is full of deeper colour, broad in treatment, grand and striking in effect. Some of the drawings of

this period, especially those executed on rough paper, of which, in his later years, he was peculiarly fond, have been disparaged as coarse, dauby, and blotty. But those who study them with care, and get to understand the painter's intentions, cannot fail to recognise their wonderful power, and to see in these generalised views of Nature the work of a perfectly trained hand, and the evidence of a mind full of resource; the work of a master, indeed, who had the key to the great mystery, and was bent upon plucking out the heart of it.

Cox was no imitator, no learner from other painters, no follower of a school; whatever he did had his own individuality stamped full and clear upon it. You pick him out at once, let whatever may be put in competition with him. Even in his merest indications of a subject there is an obvious completeness which few painters attain; his work is thoroughly studied; before he begins he knows what he intends to do; he does it, leaving nothing to chance, or to the help of happy accident, or undesigned effect. Thus his pictures are truthful in the highest sense, and, especially in those of his later years, they have the great quality of suggestiveness, the result of the painter's own powerful imagination, aided by his mastery over execution, and his long and intimate study of the phases of Nature. As Cox himself said of his own works, he strives to exhibit the superiority of mind over mechanism. Yet, though conscious of this aim, he was uniformly modest, and inclined to depreciate his own power. To the last he fancied there were secrets known to oil painters

which he could never discover. When in London, he thought so little of his powers that he used to destroy many of his drawings, and put the fragments down a sewer grating, in a particular spot, which he once showed to a friend, saying that many of his works had gone down there, and floated off to the Thames. Even in the height of his power he would sometimes destroy a morning's work at Bettws, tearing up the paper, or painting out on the canvas. He had no trace of conceit or self-satisfaction in his work. Though valuing honest praise from those who could judge it, he never allowed the good opinion of his friends to lead him into undue self-appreciation. Simple, as we have seen, in his character, tastes, habits, appearance, and mode of life, he was simple also in the materials he used, always choosing the fewest colours, and those which were tried and proved for endurance; and he was simple likewise in the directness of his purpose, and consequently in the effect of his work. Thus arises one of his greatest charms—the homeliness, and, so to speak, the friendliness of his pictures. Even the grandest of them have this quality. We see in them what he wished us to see, and we see also something of the character of the man himself. In his company we forget the studio, and go straight out of doors, on the moor, into the shady lanes and open fields, among the trees, by the river-side, on the mountain crag; we stand in the full warm sunlight, or breast the storm, or shrink from the dull chillness of “the level waste, the rounding grey.” Throughout the whole series of

Cox's works there is the same feeling; it is Nature strongly tinged with his own individuality, that he presents to us—never a mere transcript of outline, or detail, or colour; but a subject carefully chosen, well thought out, enriched with its due effect, heightened by appropriate and studied incident, the fulfilment of a definite purpose, the presentment of some phase of grandeur or beauty, discernible in its completeness only through the mind of the artist himself; and this so rendered as to suggest more even than it directly conveys. It is thus that he makes friends of those who are alike lovers of Nature and Art. It is thus that he elicits from the most cultivated and the most uneducated, a response alike in kind, though differing in degree.

Surprise has been expressed that Cox should have quitted London, with all its attractions and advantages, and should have retired to Birmingham, at a period when he might have been expected to take a foremost place amongst water-colour painters in the metropolis. The reasons which induced him to make the change may be readily understood. In London he was largely engaged in teaching, and this occupation, never agreeable to him, became hateful as he grew older. Towards the last, it is known that but for the influence of his wife he would often have refused to fulfil his teaching engagements. Sometimes she had literally to take him to the houses at which

he had engaged to give lessons; and it was only on her account that he consented to submit to the drudgery for so long a period. His great aim, at that period, was to make a secure provision for her, and to lay by something for his own old age; for he was keenly sensitive to family obligations, and his own sense of personal independence was forcibly developed. No sooner was the object above mentioned fairly secured, than Cox felt an over-mastering desire to break loose from the life of a drawing-master; and the fact that David Cox the younger was willing to take this work off his hands, and to trust largely to it as a means of living for himself, quickened desire into determination. Freedom was a passion with David Cox; liberty of movement; release from regular engagements; liberty to devote himself wholly to art, and time and means to practise it in his own way, and wherever he would. By returning to Birmingham he secured this object effectually. He lived amongst charming scenery, for the village of Harborne was then a delightful rural retreat; he had easy access to his favourite sketching-grounds; he had perfect mastery of his time and movements; and he had also, what was essential both to his happiness and to his progress in art, the society of a circle of attached and intelligent friends, some of them painters, like himself, and others amateurs of rare cultivation and capacity. The artistic society to be found in Birmingham and its neighbourhood was, just then, of a remarkable character. One of the best of English engravers, Mr. William Radclyffe, one of Cox's

oldest friends, lived there. Amongst the resident artists were Mr. Samuel Lines, from whose drawing-school proceeded many painters and engravers of note; Mr. Henshaw, whose fame as a painter of woodland and mountain scenery will probably, some day, equal Cox's own reputation; Mr. Hall, the author of the "Memoirs" now before the reader; Mr. Peter Hollins, sculptor; and Mr. Charles Radclyffe, the son of the engraver. Besides these there were Mr. William Roberts, upon whose instruction in oil-painting Cox especially relied, and with whom he maintained close and affectionate intimacy; Mr. Edward Everitt, an old and faithful artist friend, and an early purchaser of his works; Mr. Charles Birch, an amateur and collector of note, who had then a fine gallery of works by modern English masters; and, finally, Mr. Charles Hawker, a picture lover, as well as a picture dealer, to whom English Art is indebted in a special manner. This may seem a bold thing to say, but it is true, for Mr. Hawker was one of the earliest dealers to perceive that the modern English School had been too long overshadowed by an excessive regard for the productions of the so-called Old Masters. Holding this belief, and recognising the merits of many young English painters, he set himself to the task of making their works popular within the range of his influence. He was, for example, a strong advocate of the works of the Norwich School—the Cromes, Stark, Cotman, Vincent, &c. He brought into Birmingham the first work known there by Müller (this was as early as 1834), and

he afterwards was the means of placing some of Müller's finest works in the galleries of collectors in the Midlands. Acting largely on Mr. Hawker's advice, several Birmingham collectors, and others in the neighbourhood, bought fine samples of such painters as Turner, Etty, Collins, Mulready, Frith, and others; and to him, in a great measure, was due the formation of Mr. Gillott's famous gallery, Mr. Hawker, in the later years of his life, being intimately associated with Mr. Gillott, and giving his whole attention to that gentleman's collection. The persons above mentioned, with the addition of a few well-known collectors, formed a sort of Cox circle in Birmingham, and, though at first they had hard work to persuade others of the genius of Cox, their own appreciation of him was intense, and their faith in his future fame never wavered. Indeed, they proved the fidelity of their regard by buying Cox's works at the time when these came repeatedly back unsold, and sometimes unhung, from the exhibitions; and the soundness of their judgment has long since been established by the general opinion.

There is no doubt, as Mr. Hall tells us in his Memoir, that Cox derived not only exquisite pleasure, but likewise valuable encouragement and useful hints from those who were his intimates at Birmingham, and the attractions of whose society largely induced him to return finally to his native town. Cox was so modest and self-distrusting that he needed encouragement. It has already been stated that he destroyed drawing after drawing under

the impression that he had made failures where he hoped for successes. Sometimes, also, after he began to work in oil, he would efface the product of a day's labour in a fit of temporary disgust and despair. On this point his old friend Mr. Charles Radclyffe writes to me: "One great characteristic I well remember of Cox was that if he did not like a picture he seldom altered it. In going through an exhibition with him I would say, 'I don't like that picture, Mr. Cox;' then he would rejoin, 'Then why do you look at it?' Despondent over his own work, and ever finding much fault with it, he was always tearing up, day after day, to begin again and again. Often he drew tears from his wife, who would exclaim, 'Don't, David! don't destroy that drawing,' and would rescue some admirable study which her husband was tearing up, or thrusting into the fire." This reference to his wife is confirmed by another friend of Cox's, Mr. Allen Everitt, the son of one of his oldest friends, who relates that Cox has often told him that, especially in his London life, he never should have done half he actually did, but for his wife's persuasions. He was, Mr. Everitt says, tenderly attached to her; indeed, he did nothing without her advice, referring to her judgment continually both as to the subjects he took and their treatment. She was a sensible, intelligent woman, with an intense enjoyment of Art, and a high critical faculty, modestly and very quietly expressed. It was her husband's delight to have her near him whilst he painted at home. She used to sit close to him, in a high-backed chair—Mrs. Cox's chair, it was called—

while he worked in the bay window of their sitting-room at Greenfield.

Reference has been made in Mr. Hall's Memoir to Cox's methods and principles of working. It is interesting to turn to the artist's own observations on these points, as conveyed in his publications and letters.

In a letter of advice to Mr. David Cox, jun. (November 14, 1842), he speaks of his methods of working in water-colours :—

Try by lamplight a subject in charcoal, and don't be afraid of darks, and work up the subject throughout with charcoal in the darks, middle tint and half, and with some very spirited touches in parts to give a marking. When you have done all this, have your colours quite soft, and colour upon the charcoal. Get all the depth of the charcoal, and be not afraid of the colour. When you look at it by daylight, and clean it with bread, you will find a number of light parts which have been left where the colour would not exactly adhere over the charcoal. For a distant mountain I have used cobalt and vermilion; and in the greyer part I mix a little lake and a small quantity of yellow ochre with the cobalt. In the middle distance I work each part separately; in fact, something like mosaic work. The foreground the same, taking care to leave the reflected lights clear for a distant cool or bluish tint. I use very sensitive colours for the middle distance—for green, indigo, lake, and gamboge, with its varieties; occasionally, for the rocks, cobalt, vermilion, or yellow ochre, and sometimes lake instead of the vermilion. In the foreground I use indigo and vandyke brown, and indigo and brown-pink—sometimes add sepia to the indigo and brown-pink. I use for the grey in the sky cobalt and vermilion; and for the more neutral grey cobalt and light red.

In another letter to his son David, dated from

Harborne, December 31, 1845, he describes his method of working in oil colour:—

In your darks you will use the transparent colours; and if you were to procure a pot of some fine powder of plaster of Paris to mix with the transparent colours, it assists to give them a substance without making them look opaque. In your greens or half lights also use a little of the plaster of Paris, and so on till you come to the high lights, when you may use Naples yellow, lemon yellow, and also yellow ochre. White, I think, must be cautiously used, only in such sparkling touches as Constable did; but there are occasions where white must be used, in very pale greens, upon dock leaves, &c. I use the same colour, or nearly the same, for oil as in water; for instance, light red and cobalt for extreme distances, and so on towards the middle distance, where I should begin with a light Prussian blue and light red, and in the nearer part Prussian blue and burnt Sienna, and a light red, all three together; and in the foreground bitumen and Prussian blue. The second green, or half lights, with Prussian blue, light red, and yellow ochre, and vary it with raw sienna; the high lights with an addition of lemon yellow and Naples yellow; but you will find terra vert and ivory black, or terra vert and raw umber, very good; terra vert is a most useful colour. Do not use Indian red in your greens; as I said before, use light red, and work in the compounding of your tints in a very similar way to what you would in water-colour painting.

The main principles upon which Cox based his works may be gathered from his “Treatise on Landscape Painting;” the ideas are manifestly his own, though the dress in which he presented them was probably shaped by some one more accustomed to literary composition:—

The principal art of landscape painting consists in conveying to the mind the most forcible effect which can be produced from the various classes of scenery which possess the power of exciting an

interest superior to that resulting from any other effects and which can only be obtained by a most judicious selection of particular tints, and a skilful arrangement and application of them to difference in time, seasons, and situations. This is the grand principle upon which pictorial excellence hinges, as many pleasing objects, the combination of which render a piece perfect, are frequently passed over by an observer because the whole of the composition is not under the influence of a suitable effect. Thus a cottage or a village scene requires a soft or a simple admixture of tones, calculated to produce pleasure without astonishment. On the contrary, the structures of greatness and antiquity should be marked by a character of awful sublimity, suited to the dignity of the subjects, indenting on the mind a reverential and permanent expression, and giving at once a corresponding and unequivocal grandeur to the pictures. Much depends upon the classification of the objects, which should wear a magnificent uniformity; and much on the colouring, which should be deep and impressive. In the selection of a subject for working, the student should ever keep in view the powerful object which induced him to make the sketch, whether it be mountains, or castle, group of trees, a corn-field, river scene, or any other object. The prominence of this leading feature in the piece should be duly supported throughout; the character of the picture should be derived from it; every other object introduced should be subservient to it; and the attraction of the one should be the attraction of the whole. . . . The picture should be complete and perfect in the mind before it is ever traced upon the canvas.

Again, in “*The Young Artist’s Companion*,” he insists upon keeping effect steadily in mind:—

Abrupt and irregular lines are productive of a grand or strong effect; while serenity is the result of even and horizontal lines. Morning effect, for instance, may be displayed in any composition, the form and character of which are pleasing to the eye; where the pendent forms of trees, combined with other objects, communicate to the mind a delightful impression. Owing to the great glare of light in midday effects, hay-fields, corn-fields, or any busy scenes on rivers, are suitable. As regards eve or twilight, such effects being cal-

culated to convey to the mind the impression of grandeur, the composition should be studied to produce the same; and the colouring ought to be perfectly in unison with the peaceful repose or the gloomy majesty which contrasts the scene. A flat country on the marshy banks of a winding river should be seen beneath a grey coloured sky. The transient effect adapted to such a landscape is provided by the fleeting lights of the sunbeams struggling between the interstices of the flowing clouds. The old pollard willow is strictly characteristic of this scene, and its situation in the landscape might be such as to carry the eye through all the various meanderings of the stream. In landscapes which are low, and, on the whole, less prolific in interest, and less gratifying to the eye, an additional feature of interest should be thrown into the sky, to aid, by the contrast it would afford, the effect of the whole; and where the scene itself is naturally full of interest, the picture will, of course, admit of a less beautiful and imposing sky.

It is impossible to give, with any reasonable approach to correctness, an estimate of the number of drawings Cox produced in the course of his fifty years' practice of art. The fact that he contributed from 1813 down to the year of his death numerous drawings—in some years nearly forty—to the exhibitions of the Water-Colour Society, will enable the reader to form some idea of the total number. But such a computation would, after all, be delusive, for the great majority of Cox's drawings never went to an exhibition at all. They were bought by friends and visitors, and carried away from the artist's painting room; and, in a great many instances, they still remain in the possession of the original owners. It has already been mentioned that, by such purchases as these, a local dealer had at

one time about eight hundred drawings and sketches in his possession, many of them, of course, unfinished—mere suggestions of colour or form, but a large proportion consisting of works either completely finished or well advanced towards completion. Collections of a hundred drawings were by no means infrequent in Birmingham and the neighbourhood at the period of Cox's death; and there still remain several collections of importance, though most of those originally formed have been disposed of on account of the death of their owners, or under the strong temptation of the high prices realised in 1872. It is probably within the truth to say that the number of Cox's drawings is so great, and their dispersion so wide-spread, that every collection of works of art, of any importance, throughout the kingdom, contains one or more examples of them; excepting, it must be said, and not without shame, the National Gallery, in which no specimen of Cox's work is to be found, though there are a few, but comparatively unimportant, examples in the collection at South Kensington Museum. The principal original collectors, those who bought Cox's drawings during the artist's life, and whose collections have since been dispersed by sale, were Mr. Charles Birch (sales in 1856 and 1857), Mr. Norman Wilkinson (1861), Mr. William Roberts (1867), Mr. Peter Allen (1869), Mr. Thomas Brown (1869), Mr. Edwin Bullock (1870), Mr. J. Tattersall (1872). To these must be added Mr. Gillott, the sale of whose collection took place in 1872; but who bought only two or three works by Cox while the painter was living,

though he was a large purchaser afterwards. Details of the sales just mentioned will be found in Mr. Solly's "Life of Cox." Since 1872 there have been few sales of importance, excepting Mr. Quilter's, which, it is understood, did not include his best works by Cox; the sale by the artist's son, the present Mr. David Cox; and the sale of Mr. F. Timmins' collection.

The dispersion of Cox's drawings, above referred to, prevents any complete enumeration of existing collections. Amongst the largest are those of Mr. Ellis, of Streatham (Cox's executor), Mr. W. Quilter, and Mr. F. Nettlefold, of London, Mr. J. D. Perrins, of Malvern, and Mr. Holbrook Gaskell, of Liverpool. Important collections are also in the hands of Messrs. Agnew, Mr. Alfred Betts and Mrs. Hyla Betts, Birmingham, Mrs. Bullock, Handsworth, Birmingham, Mr. George Graham, Birmingham, Mr. E. Harvey, Liverpool, Mr. J. Henderson, London, Mr. R. Leake, Manchester, Mr. G. W. Moss, Liverpool, Mr. P. H. Rathbone, Liverpool, Mr. J. E. Taylor, Manchester and London, Mr. G. F. Prange, Liverpool, and the artist's son, Mr. David Cox.

Cox's oil pictures can be more accurately enumerated, and their present locality stated. There is no precise record of the number; but those who are best qualified to judge—his intimate friends, Mr. C. W. Radclyffe, and the late Mr. William Hall—estimate the total at a little over one hundred. Of these, fifty-seven were exhibited at Liverpool in 1875. The principal possessors of Cox's oil pictures are Mr. F. Nettlefold, of London; Mr. J. H. Nettlefold, of

King's Heath, near Birmingham; and Mrs. Edward Nettlefold, of Edgbaston, Birmingham. Between them, these members of the Nettlefold family are the owners of probably three-fourths of the oil pictures. Amongst these are—"The Skylark," "Bolton Park," "The Hayfield," "Windsor Castle," "The Salmon Trap," "Dudley Castle," "Haymaking near Conway," "Bolton Abbey," belonging to Mr. F. Nettlefold; "Rhyl Sands," "Changing Pasture," "Skirts of the Forest," "Waiting for the Ferry," "Going to the Hayfield," and a number of smaller works, belonging to Mr. J. H. Nettlefold; and the "Welsh Funeral," "Cross Roads," and "Mill near Lichfield," and others, belonging to Mrs. E. Nettlefold. The Nettlefold family also possess a large collection of Cox's finest drawings.

Something should be said of the prices realised by Cox for his works. It is not a pleasant subject, this talk, now far too frequent, of the money gains of painters, yet with regard to Cox it is essential, for without reference to the pay he received, the reader would fail thoroughly to understand two things about him: first, the long, and hard, and wearying task of making a bare living, until he was well past middle age; and second, the marvellous advance in the public estimate of his art, so far as this can be measured by the prices given since his death for his works. The modesty of the man himself, his self-distrust, his habit

of putting art foremost and profit after, may also be gathered from such a review. The earliest record of Cox's prices is a mere curiosity: it is literally a bill made out to a theatre manager at Wolverhampton, for 310 yards of scenery, at 4s. per square yard. This was done when he was twenty-five, soon after his removal from Birmingham to London. Of the sales of drawings, the earliest record is in 1811, when Mr. Everitt, of Birmingham, bought from him twelve sepia drawings at 8s. each; and seventeen drawings in colours, for eighteen guineas the lot! In the next year, he sells drawings at prices varying from 10s. 6d. to £1 11s. 6d. In 1814, the year after he was elected a member of the Water-Colour Society, Mr. Everitt bought from him ten drawings for £12. In the same year, so doubtful was his chance of living by practice as an artist, that he was glad to take an engagement as teacher of drawing at Miss Croucher's school at Hereford, at a stipend of £100 a year, for which he undertook to give lessons twice a week. Two years later he enters in his account-book a charge of £17 17s. (including entrance fees) for "half a year's instruction to five young ladies" at Miss Poole's school at Hereford; and he sells to Miss Poole herself five drawings for £2 12s. 6d. His prices remained at much the same humble standard for a considerable time. In 1818, for example, Mr. Everitt buys six Indian-ink drawings at 7s. each; and Messrs. Fuller, of London, give him 8s. each for twenty-five sepia drawings, and £1 5s. each for drawings in colours.

These were heart-breaking terms for a man who was conscious of genius, and who had taken a recognised position amongst water-colour painters; but, bad as they were, Cox had to put up with them for years longer. In 1825—he was then forty-two years old—he sold to Mr. William Radclyffe (the engraver of his studies for the “Warwickshire” and the “North and South Wales”) small drawings at £1 5s., and larger ones at £6 6s. In one instance, in this year, he rose as high as £12 12s. for a large drawing of “Cader Idris.” At the same time, however, he received only two and three guineas from Messrs. Fuller for each sheet of etchings for his art publications—poor pay indeed, when compared with the amount such work would obtain from the publishers now. Nor was he more successful in the exhibitions. In the year just mentioned (1827), he sent seventeen drawings to the Water-Colour Society’s Exhibition. They were varied enough in subject to please all tastes; for they included English and Welsh views, coast and inland scenery, mountain and moor, figure studies as well as landscape. But they did not sell; and, in a fit of disgust and despair, Cox withdrew the whole of them, by the simple but effective method of going round and himself marking them “sold.” This was a passing feeling, however. Cox was a brave and patient man, and usually bore his want of success without repining, or, at least, without showing that he felt it. That he did feel it, keenly, there is no doubt; for on leaving Hereford for London, in 1827, he wrote to his old friend Mr. Radclyffe, asking “if he

did not think it would be better for him to go to Cheltenham, and make small drawings, which he could sell to the visitors at five shillings each?" By degrees his position and prospects mended, though slowly and poorly at the best.

In 1830 there is an entry of the sale of five drawings to Mr. Everitt for £12; next year four drawings sold in the Liverpool exhibition for £23 10s.—just under £6 each. In 1837 his highest price for small drawings—quarto imperial size—was £6 6s. Even as lately as 1845, after his removal to Birmingham, and when he was over sixty years of age, he had scarcely reached the point, in regard to prices, at which young artists of promise now begin, for in that year he made a large drawing of Carnarvon Bay for his friend Mr. Birch, for £19 19s., a smaller drawing of a lane scene for £8 8s., and a large drawing—probably imperial size—for £25. In 1846 one of his most famous oil pictures, the "Peace and War"—18 in. by 24 in.—was painted. Cox's estimate of its value was £20, for which he sold it to Mr. Thomas Darby. He re-sold it for £25. Then, after the painter's death, Mr. Gillott bought it, together with another picture, for £650. At the sale of Mr. Gillott's collection, in 1872—the year in which the competition for Cox's works was at its height—the "Peace and War" brought £3,601, the purchaser being Mr. Montague Gillott, who had a hard struggle to obtain it. In 1847, in one of his letters, Cox mentions with delight that he is to have 70 guineas for an oil picture—his ordinary price for a medium-sized work in oil was then £40. One of his

studies of a "Hayfield," in oil, painted in that year for a Birmingham dealer, at £40, brought a few years later £1,550 ; another work of the same year, the "Old Mill at Bettws," also sold by the painter for £40, brought £1,575 after his death.

In 1846, one of his largest works in oil, "The Vale of Clwyd" (56 inches by 39 inches), was priced by him at £95. This picture was exchanged with Mr. Nixon, a Birmingham dealer and frame maker, for an unfinished work by Müller. Mr. Nixon sold it for £70, such was then the "trade" estimate of Cox's money value. In 1868 it was re-sold for £480, and soon afterwards Mr. W. Sharp of Endwood Court, Handsworth, Birmingham, gave £580 for it. In his possession it remained until 1872, when Mr. M'Lean, of the Haymarket, bought it for £2,000. Of this picture a fine etching, by M. Brunet Debaines, was issued in 1879. Perhaps the most notable illustration of the difference between Cox's prices and the sums his works have since realised, is afforded by his oil picture of "The Skylark," usually and justly regarded as one of his very finest productions ; perhaps, indeed, his very best. This work was painted in 1849, and was exhibited at Birmingham, in the rooms of the Society of Artists, where it was bought by Mr. E. A. Butler, a local dealer and collector, and a good friend and admirer of Cox, for £40. Mr. Butler sold it some time afterwards, but the purchaser repented of the bargain, and the picture was taken back. In 1859, the year of the painter's death, it was bought by Mr. S. Mayou, a Birmingham collector, for £50 ; and

Mr. Mayou kept it until the memorable year 1872, when he sold it for £2,300 to Mr. Frederick Nettlefold, of London, in whose possession, as the gem of his collection, it still remains. It is needless, however—as needless as it is distasteful—to multiply examples of the prices realised by the artist himself, as compared with those since obtained in “the picture market.” One more illustration will be enough: it is that of “The Sea-shore at Rhyl.” This picture, painted in 1855, brought the artist the highest price he ever received for any work—namely, £100, for which it was sold in the Liverpool exhibition, in 1864. Five years after the painter’s death it was sold for £150; prices had not then gone up. Ultimately—of course, in 1872—it realised the sum of £2,300. How greatly Cox would have been amazed at this increased money-value of his works may be inferred from a letter written by him in 1849:—

I went [he says] to sale of pictures on Tuesday [the note is dated March 15th] at Mr. Butler’s, at Handsworth, his country-house; they are all modern, and nearly all by Birmingham artists. There were five of mine; they fetched more than the price they cost him, *even with the frames.*

As late as 1853 he writes:—

Several of my small pictures, nine inches by fourteen inches, which I have sold for £5, have been sold for £15, and others at the same proportion; other pictures which I received £40 each for sold for £75. I have given notice to one or two friends that I would not take any more commissions at the price I have hitherto had.

In the same year he writes with sadness, and surely

with a touch of justifiable warmth:—"I am now confined to my bed-room—a most violent attack of bronchitis, which nearly suffocates me at times. If I should be spared I will get rid of some commissions and make no more promises, but merely go out when I please, and paint what I please. It is no use my working for some; they are rather too selfish, and hurry me to paint faster than it is possible. Perhaps they are aware that if I should die they will not be able to procure any more. Some who have not set that value upon my small bits, have parted with them at an advance of two hundred per cent., and in some cases more." In another letter written in the same year, he again returns to the subject. Referring to the Water-Colour Society's Exhibition he says:—

I hope to be in London on the 3rd of May, and then I will take out of the price book the sums I have asked for my four large drawings, and if there are those of the public who appreciate mind before mechanism, they will write to me to learn how I estimate them. *I may be wrong, but the world has yet to be taught.* Perhaps I may be made vain by some here [this letter was written from Harborne] who think my "Summit of a Mountain" worth—I am almost afraid to say—£100; and if I could paint it in oil, I shall some day [D.V.] get that sum.

He did once reach this wonderful ideal, as we have already seen; but only once. That he should think it so marvellous is the clearest illustration of his modest estimate of his own worth, and, perhaps, of his carelessness of mere money getting; but he always felt great hesitation as to raising his prices. His ordinary and latest charge for a small drawing—

quarto imperial size—was £10; and for a drawing of imperial size—his exhibition size—£40. These were his prices for finished works. Studies and sketches were scattered broadcast at much lower rates. Sometimes—not improbably by those who failed to reap an advantage by him—Cox was reproached with a want of liberality in money matters. He was near and close, they said. The imputation cannot be justified. He was careful, doubtless; those who have read this record of his gains will see that he had need to be careful. He had struggled so hard, and his earnings had been so limited, and his savings so modest, that he might well keep firm hold upon what he could save. But, as all who had personal knowledge of him are well aware, he was generous in his kindly charities, and was liberal in professional dealings. When those who wanted advice in matters of art came to him and asked for it, he gave it freely, though his time was precious. He gave help, also, in a substantial way; and he gave away drawings, frequently as free gifts, and often at prices which made them practical gifts.

To the last he asked the most moderate prices for his finest works—think of £100 being the highest sum he ever asked or had!—he never pressed any man to buy from him—he had in his character no trace of the money-hunter. No speculation tempted him; no expedient to make his money breed profit had any fascination for him; his one and only desire was to provide enough for his old age, if the power of work should fail, and to leave a modest bequest to those who might be dependent

upon him. So much as he could get went quietly into the Three Per Cents. and stopped there; Cox being content, so that the money was safe, and that no thought of it drew away his thoughts from Art. When he died, in his seventy-seventh year, after a life of unceasing industry—for he never slackened and never idled, working, indeed, as hard as Turner himself—he left about £12,000, the result of being before the public for fifty years as an exhibiting artist. A painter of the first rank would now make nearly, if not quite as much, in a single year. Two or three of his own oil pictures and half a dozen of his best drawings, now that he is dead, would sell for the whole amount he saved in half a century of unremitting labour.

But in his day painters had none of the great chances, at least Cox himself had none. The world, as he said, had indeed to be taught—it had to learn the intrinsic worth of creations of genius, the value of which cannot be expressed in money. In Cox's case the lesson has been learnt, rapidly and amply. Those who care to trace the progress of it may do so in the catalogues of sales held since the painter's death.* One thing should be said for David Cox, and said to his honour. Throughout life he was industrious, self-respecting, and thoroughly independent. His living was wrought with his own hand and brain; he never begged or borrowed; he evaded no obligation, and denied no

* Details of the principal sales, too lengthy to be incorporated here, will be found in the "Memoir of David Cox," by Mr. Neal Solly, in which notes on his principal works are also given.

just claim ; no man was the poorer for him, but many were the richer ; and not once did he break into complaint that to him art was not the bringer of wealth. To his honest simple nature it was enough to earn his daily bread, to provide modestly for those dependent upon him, to put by something if need be for old age, to find pleasure in the affection and appreciation of a few intimate friends, and to reap his great reward in the secrets which Nature revealed to him, and with which, through Art, he enriched the world.

It is a curious fact that the works of David Cox have been most sparingly reproduced by means of engraving. No English painter of eminence has been made so little known by this means. Yet, as the few examples we have sufficiently prove, Cox's drawings and oil pictures would well repay the engraver's labour. Reproductions of Cox, especially of his drawings in sepia, in the manner of Turner's "*Liber Studiorum*," would be of the highest interest and value. At one time such a work was contemplated. Cox himself, who greatly admired Turner, was fired with a generous emulation by the "*Liber Studiorum*," and made preparations for publishing a "*Cox Studiorum*." For this purpose he selected about one hundred sepia drawings ; but the design, from some unexplained cause, was laid aside, and was never resumed by him. After the painter's death, another proposal of this kind was made

by Mr. Edward Radclyffe, who began to execute some plates for the work, and who could, better perhaps than any other engraver, have given the world a rendering of Cox adequate to the master's merits, and worthy of his fame. But Mr. Radclyffe's untimely death put an end to this labour of love; all he had been able to do for it were three plates since published by the Liverpool Art Club. Now that etching has come so greatly into vogue, and that we have so many admirable etchers in this country, it is greatly to be desired that some of them should undertake the execution of a "*Cox Studiorum*." Etching is peculiarly the method adapted to the rendering of his works, in all their ease and freedom; their suggestive quality could thus be realised to perfection; and no better means could be taken to make the public acquainted with the infinite variety, the grace, the tenderness, and the power of the man who, next to Turner, has done most to record and to interpret the charms of English landscape. As matters stand, however, Cox is scarcely known through the medium of engraving. The subjoined list, it is believed, includes all that has been done for him in the way of reproduction:—

1829.—"*Warwickshire Illustrated*." Published by Messrs. Knott, Birmingham. Engraved by William Radclyffe, from drawings made by Cox and others. The collection of original drawings is now the property of the Birmingham and Midland Institute.

? 1835.—"*Wanderings in North Wales*." By Thomas Roscoe. Fifty-one plates, engraved by William Radclyffe, from drawings by Cox, Creswick, Cattermole, and others. Published by Messrs. Wrightson and Webb, Birmingham.

1837.—"*Wanderings in South Wales and the River Wye*." By Thomas

- Roscoe. Forty-eight plates, engraved by William Radclyffe from drawings by Cox, J. D. Harding, Copley Fielding, Creswick, and others. Published by Messrs. Wrightson and Webb, Birmingham.
- 1862-3.—Twelve line engravings. By Edward Radclyffe. Issued by the Art Union of London.
- 1866.—“Hay Time.” Engraved by Edward Radclyffe, and published in *The Art Journal*.
- 1868.—“Carreg Cennen.” Engraved by W. Chapman, and published in *The Art Journal*.
- 1876.—Cox “Liber Studiorum.” Three engravings by Edward Radclyffe. 1. Dudley Castle. 2. The Outskirts of a Forest. 3. Bala Lake. Published by Messrs. Colnaghi, for the Liverpool Art Club. Impression restricted to 150 copies.
- 1877.—Hardwick Hall. Etched by M. Brunet Debaines. Published in *The Portfolio*.
- 1879.—“The Vale of Clwyd.” Etched by M. Brunet Debaines. Published by Mr. M'Lean, Haymarket. Impression restricted to 125 copies.
- 1875.—“Memoirs” of David Cox. By N. Neal Solly. Illustrated with sixteen photographs from Cox's drawings. Published by Messrs. Chapman and Hall.

Besides these, there is an engraving of one of the drawings of “Lancaster Sands,” by Robert Brandard; and one of “Fishing Boats,” by A. Willmore; and, so far as the writer has been able to ascertain, these complete the list, with the exception of a few wood engravings.

Cox's own publications are all of comparatively early date, and are now very rarely to be met with. If the plates are still in existence they well deserve re-issue, for they show that Cox possessed remarkable skill as an engraver. The following, it is believed, is a complete list of them :—

- 1814.—“Treatise on Landscape Painting, and Effect in Water-Colours.” Published by S. and J. Fuller, Rathbone Place, London. This contains twenty-five pages of etchings, and thirty-two pages of

aquatint drawings. Several editions of the work were issued ; the latest in 1840.

1820.—Six Views in the City of Bath, engraved from Cox's drawings. Same publishers.

1825.—“The Young Artist's Companion : or Drawing-book of Studies and Landscape Embellishment.” Published by Messrs. Fuller. This contains forty pages of etchings, and twenty-four of aquatint drawings.

1828.—“A Series of Progressive Lessons, intended to Elucidate the Art of Landscape Painting in Water-Colours.” Published by T. Clay, London. This contains twelve plates.

1830.—“View of the County Hall, Hereford.” Published at Hereford. Drawn on stone by Cox ; the only lithograph he is known to have made.

Mr. Solly (“Life of Cox,” p. 60) mentions that in 1845 Cox made several lithotints from some of his works, with the intention of issuing a collection of them, but they were never published.

This is the fitting place in which to mention the special exhibitions held from time to time of Cox's works. Attention was called to them in a marked degree by the collection shown in 1857, at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition. In the following year—1858—a collection was made and shown at the rooms of the Hampstead Conversazione. This was promoted by the late Mr. Tom Taylor ; and Mr. John Hollingsworth, of Birmingham, who at one time possessed about 800 drawings and sketches by Cox, lent many of his choicest examples for it. In 1859, the year of the painter's death, 169 of Cox's works were shown at the German Gallery, New Bond Street. There was another exhibition at Manchester in 1870 ; and finally, in 1875, the Liverpool Art Club made their great collection, which

is sufficiently described in Mr. Hall's Memoir. In Birmingham, strange to say—the painter's birth-place, his residence for the best part of his life, and the constant home of his affections—no exhibition of his works has ever been attempted.

The sign-board painted by Cox for the "Royal Oak" at Bettws, the painting and character of which are recorded in Mr. Hall's Memoir—has lately been the subject of litigation. The sign was years ago taken down from outside the house, and was hung in the hall. In the course of last year Mr. Thomas, the then tenant of the hotel, filed a petition in bankruptcy, and the trustee of his estate claimed the sign-board as a valuable asset. The claim was disputed by Lady Willoughby d'Eresby, the owner of the Gwydyr estates, of which the hotel at Bettws forms part, and the sign-board was on her behalf demanded as the property of the ground landlord. The judge of the Carnarvonshire County Court decided the case in favour of Lady Willoughby's claim. An appeal was taken to Sir J. Bacon, the Chief Judge in Bankruptcy, who, on the 13th December, 1880, gave judgment in favour of the creditors, and reversed the decision of the county court judge. On further appeal, in February, 1881, Sir J. Bacon's decision was reversed, and it was thus finally decided that the sign-board, painted by the artist for the "Royal Oak," belongs to the owner of the hotel; and consequently remains there.

A table of the leading dates in the artist's life very fitly closes these desultory notes:—

LEADING DATES IN COX'S LIFE.

- 1783.—Born, Heath Mill Lane, Deritend, Birmingham, April 29th.
1798.—Apprenticed to a Miniature Painter.
1800.—Employed at the Birmingham Theatre.
1804.—First Residence in London, originally in Lambeth, afterwards at Dulwich.
1805.—First Journey into North Wales.
1813.—Elected member of Society of Painters in Water-Colours.
1814.—Removal to Hereford.
1827.—Second Residence in London, at 9, Foxley Road, Kennington.
1841.—Removal to Harborne, near Birmingham.
1856.—Visit to Edinburgh, to sit to Sir J. Watson Gordon.
1859.—Death.
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- 1826.—Visit to Holland and Belgium.
1829.—First visit to France.
1832.—Second visit to France.
1844.—First Sketching visit to Bettws-y-coed.
1856.—Last visit to Bettws.



THE END.

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Hall, William

A biography of David Cox, with remarks on his works and genius ed., with
add., by John Thackray Bunce

London [u.a.] 1881

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